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The Times Literary Supplement

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Cover picture: Self-portrait by Man Ray (1914), on show at the Anthony D'Offy Gallery, 23 Dering Street, London W1.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 148

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than December 2. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 148" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX.

1 You are middle-aged now, as I am. Write your notes up.

2 The rattling window. Keep your marriage vows. As I shall.

3 Damn it, let's you duty to get married. You can't always live for pleasure. Every man of position is married nowadays. Bachelors are not fashionable any more. They are a damaged lot.

4 Why have such scores of lovely, gifted girls married impossible men?

5 Simple self-sacrifice may be ruled out. And philosophy endeavour, like times put of pen.

1 It was at this window that the clergyman who dwelt in the Manse stood watching the outburst of long and densely struggle between two nations saw the irregular array of his parishioners who farther side of the river and the glittering towers of British on the hither bank.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Old Manse"

2 Take the wings Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness Or lose thyself in the continuous woods Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound. Save his own dashings – yet the dead shut him out. In their last sleep – the dead reign there!

William Cullen Bryant, "Thanatopsis"

3 The huge green fragment of foot on which a slight patch of green and a few weeds were growing, but she stayed there not a moment. With a desperate energy she leaped to another rock, another cake; stumbling, leaping, always upward again! Her shoes were gone – her stockings out from her feet – while blood poured from her wounds. But she saw nothing, felt nothing, till, in a dream, she saw the Ohio Alps, and a man in a top hat.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Minister's Wife"

Committed in committee

Liam Hudson

F. G. BAILEY
The Tactical Uses of Passion: An Essay on Power, Reason, and Reality
275pp. Cornell University Press. £25 (paperback, £8.50). 08014 1556 X

Like most devices that devour our lives, committees are hard to place. We accept them as filling the gap between youthful idealism and pension, but still they hover uncertainly in the mind, refusing to be quite simply this or that. On the one hand, the committee is the orderly way of doing things. Reason is its dominant virtue. Yet it is the committee, more than any other feature of institutional life, that forces us to acknowledge, as Oxenstierna warned his son, "how small a part reason plays in governing the world". For all its air of rationality, the elaboration of its procedural rules, the committee remains a focus of unease. While some of the doubts and ambiguities it generates are practical – matters of how committees work, what purposes they serve – others are, for lack of a better word, moral. Committees are shrouded in a sense of the equivocal; and they are so not for a single reason, but for a nest of reasons that are woven into one another and loosely interlock.

Churchill, it is said, after a passionately patriotic speech in the Commons during the war, hurling defiance in Hitler's face, shaking his audience with emotion and shaking himself too, stepped outside and, with an impish grin, remarked to a crony "That got the sods, didn't it?" If you are worldly wise such a comment fits into place as part of the management of an unruly world, a recognition of its contradictions. If not, it edges dangerously close to the obscene.

Many of us who fail to achieve worldly wisdom none the less shuffle towards it, despite idealism fades. Churchill, it slowly dawns, may have been an actor whose cause was impeccable; a showman, but a man of destiny too, whose comments off-stage are an irrelevance. Those asides of his might even have been an admission of humility; his acknowledgment, after god-like flight, that he was just as boringly mortal as the man passing water at his left or right elbow. To be the vehicle of history is bound to exert a psychological strain; and the

strain is there even when history chooses to express itself through Minor Works.

Yet however much of a pro one is, such a story must stir a ripple of disquiet. (And if it does not stir a ripple, it ought to, one is tempted to say.) We can repeat it with relish, match it with chestnuts about Harold Wilson or Lloyd George, adopt the sardonic tone appropriate to the inside track. But a sense of moral queasiness refuses quite to evaporate. It is part of our vision of a just life that there should be no such chasms between the story told to the audience across the footlights and the story told behind the hand.

All this, it need hardly be said, is the stuff of social science. Power and persuasion; the social construction of rationality; the institutional basis of political action. One would expect social scientists to have pored in their scores over the committees in their own universities for the past half century or more; to have used them as the basis of countless scholarly inquiries. Here, for once, they are not outsiders trying to make sense of the alien, grappling with language barriers and strange customs. They already know what it is like to sit around that particular sort of table and observe those procedural rules. They have immediate access to what passes through the actors' minds: they can talk to them over coffee afterwards, or, simpler still, introspect.

Yet for all the thousands of anthropologists, sociologists, social psychologists and political scientists who have danced with brilliance on the academic stage, scarcely one has so much as hinted at an academic interest in what committees do. Why? The moment the question is posed, it answers itself. They cannot make explicit the ways in which this particular set of games are played without spoiling their own chances of winning them. If Churchill had preceded his heart-stirring address to the Commons with an impish grin and a widely audible remark about setting the sods, his address appeared psychotic.

This, then, is the social scientist's dilemma. How does he spill the beans while preserving his position? It is one that *The Tactical Uses of Passion* makes a brave bid to resolve. F. G. Bailey is an anthropologist, used to re-imposing cultures, who has already taken committees seriously, and here does so again. As his title implies, he is interested in how people get their way, and others are swept aside in order that this can happen. His texts he takes from his

own experience of sitting in committees, from works of political science, including the Churchill story just mentioned, and from literature, particularly C. P. Snow and John le Carré.

Professor Bailey's treatment of the committee is heavily weighted towards the practical. In undertaking it, he remains within the social scientist's equivalent of the kirk. Notoriously, though, a danger awaits. In a field like this, dispassion slips easily into relish, and relish into celebration. Inadvertently, he may create new heroes. His observations may be all the more persuasively a matter of "ought" for being cast onto the page in the form of "is".

The early chapters of *The Tactical Uses of Passion* establish Bailey as scholarly. If, in the end, he is going to fall into this particularly modern error, it will not be through carelessness. He will do so because his treatment of committee life is in understandable but dangerous ways partial, and because the error is, in any case, extraordinarily difficult to avoid.

In the event, these early chapters are given over to issues that should be the concern of psychologists but are left to neighbours: the notion, for example, that there are colonies of selves in each of us – the tactical, moral, civic, silly and divine selves – and that these are deployed, within contexts like that of a committee, according to certain detectable rhythms. It is the civic self that provides the dominant tone of a committee's work, but excursions are executed either into displays of hostility, where moral or tactical selves come into operation, or into demonstrations of solidarity, where it is the jokes of the silly self that do the work. Phrases like "Time to get down to business..." and "The task that faces us..." signal that the civic self is asserting itself, in the speaker's mind at least; whereas phrases like "I thought we did that rather well..." and "We're on form today..." show that it is a traffic that permits distance too. (The moral self enters this analysis, it is his values are affronted. It is an element in his struggle to get his own way.)

A committee is seen as having a "career", moving, in principle, from impatience, a phase dominated by the tactical self, through solidarity, through maturity, during which members evolve and use what Bailey calls a "sophisticated code", to senility, where sophistications become an end in themselves. Bailey examines the rhetorics of assertion and compromise,

largely by means of examples from politicians' speeches; but it is the sophisticated code that exerts the greatest fascination, and it is to this that he returns towards the end.

A passage from Snow's *The Search* is dwelt upon: the one in which the members of an exalted scientific committee bicker with one another about whether to meet in London, Oxford or Cambridge, or somewhere further afield. As it happens, Snow's dialogue has worn badly. Men of science can still be heard to niggle with one another in that embarrassingly smug yet pea-brained way, but they do so now in parody of a manner long abandoned. A sense of immediacy returns when Bailey turns to le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy*. First, Elizabeth Worthington, later Liese, receives attention; and then, right at the end, Bailey settles upon the steering committee which receives George Smiley's report on Mr Ko.

Elizabeth Worthington is helpful because she reopens the question of multiple selves and the significance of the relation between them. "Of course", her abandoned husband explains, "kisses means nothing with her. She kisses everybody, the pupils, her girl-friends – she'd kiss the dustman, anyone." What is more, "every relationship has to be a conquest. With her child, the waiter at the restaurant... Then, when she's won them, they bore her. Naturally."

There is the question, of course – Bailey describes it as a "common-sense" one – of whether Elizabeth Worthington is sincere. He concedes that, elsewhere in le Carré's narrative, she could be loyal to those who have befriended her or have been her lovers, and that this is an equivalent of sincerity: "Tell him I kept faith", she says, "It's what he cares about most. I stuck to the deal." But sincerity is, within the terms of the account Bailey undertakes, a peripheral matter:

to be sincere, so far as the culture of persuasion is concerned, is to be judged by another person not to be of that kind of truth is unattainable, sometimes even for oneself.

What is critical is the mingling together of incompatible elements, especially those minglings that destroy the listener's sense of trust. In Elizabeth's case, what is mingled are the moral and tactical selves. These are in principle antipathetic, yet they coexist – as it were, as "percentages" – in the mind of every politically

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motivated person. There is a puzzle here, in other words, about which minglings are perceived as abominable and which not. Whether Bailey resolves this or merely side-steps it, I was uncertain. In any event, he moves forward by drawing another distinction: that between the mentionable and the unmentionable, what is above the line and what below. In gatherings like the le Carré steering committee, items from below the line have to be used, but can only be used indirectly; and it is in this deviousness, if I have followed Bailey, that the essence of the sophisticated code resides.

Winning depends, in other words, on sensitivity to local ground-rules and guile. You have to know which corners can be cut, and which not. While, as the author puts it, you can usually use a hammer to put screws into softwood, "hammering screws into hardwood is courting disaster". But what actually happens in that committee meeting about Mr Ko? Le Carré fans will know that one is never quite sure. As the television screen reminded us week after week, George Smiley is a world in which there are wooden dolls within wooden dolls, circles within circles. It is part of Le Carré's technique to leave his readers on the outside rather than inviting them in. Wilbraham and his team from the Commonwealth Office play simple-mindedly in ultra-sophisticated surroundings and are outsmarted – that much is clear. Enderby from the FO, on the other hand, is altogether more suave. "Nicely played hand", he is heard to observe afterwards. Also "Pity about old Wilbraham. He'd have run India rather well".

In retrospect, it is established, too, that the fix was in; that, unless Smiley misplayed his cards, he was going to get what he needed. It is on Smiley that, as onlookers, we concentrate. He is le Carré's hero because he pursues a vision – a meeting of minds with his opposite number in Moscow, Karla – that is more a matter of communion than of conquest, and reminds us, perhaps too insistently, Smiley is not a virile man who carries over into committee work the drama of physical strength or potency. He is a hero of a new and singular kind, Committee Man incarnate, precisely because he is outwardly so mild, sexually so insignificant.

By implication, though, Smiley is the hero not only of le Carré's books but of Bailey's too. In comparison, many of the other figures on which his analysis is based seem both psychologically and morally empty. Their manoeuvres – "in committee", as the lingo has it – leave a stale taste; the atmosphere of a charade maintained in the interests of some private vanity or hunger. Early on, for instance, Bailey describes a colleague, a dean in a new university and a man whom, from his description, many of us will think we recognize. A great empire-builder, he was "gifted with an unusual warmth

of personality, a rare sensitivity in his dealings with others, and a quite un-English ability to use displays of emotion – both the light and the dark emotions – to bring people to his side." He has an Achilles' heel though, "interdisciplinary studies"; and in pursuit of this vision, he seems, in Bailey's pages, scarcely a human being at all, more a wayward instrument.

The first of the worries that *The Tactical Uses of Passion* leaves in its wake is that it makes its actors seem vaguely tawdry: with the exception, that is, of characters drawn from fiction. And this is a second worry. In using material from novels as his text, Bailey anticipates difficulty, but does not quite seem to see where the difficulty lies. "Le Carré's novel is especially appropriate", he says, "because like Snow's *Search*, it is offered as a realistic novel" . . . "there is nothing unfamiliar, nothing that rings false, in what the characters do and say". He is right that the committee meeting in *The Honourable Schoolboy* does ring true. As we read, characters spring to life on the page, dialogue sparkles. But these are technical effects, part of the spell-binder's stock-in-trade. Has le Carré ever attended such a committee meeting in person? I believe not. And are characters in real life ever as neatly stereotyped as Enderby and Wilbraham prove to be; FO smooth, Commonwealth Office rough? Le Carré has a wonderful ear for dialogue – that is to say, a wonderful gift for writing sentences that the reader will accept as

the equivalent of spontaneous utterance – but that is something quite apart from the dispassionate observation of the ethnographer. The risk is that, in using successful fiction as a source, Bailey will feed back to us stereotypes that are no less stereotypical for being reworked with unusual skill.

Despite its subtlety and erudition, the analysis of *The Tactical Uses of Passion* has a curious effect. It throws you back on your own experience of committees in a mood of doubt. Instead of new-found illumination, "Now I see it all . . .", one mutters "Yes, but . . ." It has always been easy, one might almost say natural, to describe committees in terms of ploys and gambits, fixes and wangles. But most of us have attended at least a few that were altogether more unsettling. We each have our uneasy recollections. The one that springs to my mind is of a college council meeting in Cambridge, a long time ago, momentous in that it was a step towards major institutional change.

At this meeting, a senior fellow, not a member, had asked to address the council in person. He stood before the meeting in his sandals, tears dampening his wrinkled cheeks, reassuring the younger fellows that, despite their deep misgivings, and despite the fact that no one enjoyed them, it was our collective duty to preserve the college's traditions of dining and feasting – our duty to the college's servants who held such traditions dear. Passion was there, to be sure; and its use could well have

been in part tactical. But more importantly, were the wildly disparate worlds of experience and value that the people in that unhappy meeting represented. The senior fellow's claim to be made out of a certain eccentricity, even a self-indulgence; but the fact of its being made at all was stark reminder that new alien values – "modern" ones – were being thrust into the bowels of an institution that, over the centuries, had evolved its own idiosyncratic style.

The outcome, in the short run, was that young fellows were routed. Women were allowed in twice a week as long as they did stay to take part, where their presence might disturb the bachelor dons – not least the one who had spoken with dismay of young fellows who "hasten home to their impatient wives". Feasts were to proceed as before, with a gluttonizing in the main body of the college hall, and their wives allowed in to watch the balcony. The tide of history, however, was on the side of change. Within a year or so, college began to go co-ed, a change that, hindsight, may or may not have proved a disaster.

My point in dwelling on this small drama is to illustrate what Bailey omits. Committees are prime interest to social scientists, I would argue, not as venues for venal intrigue, ruses, nor even for the fine grain of the sophisticated code, in which the business of the state is advanced by bat-squeak. Rather, because every now and again, they are the meeting ground for the conflict and also perhaps the reconciliation of ways of life and systems of value that are radically opposed; an arena in which new visions abrade against older, but not necessarily worse ones.

As I finished *The Tactical Uses of Passion*, I occurred to me that there was another book about committees that Bailey might write. *Passionate Use of Tactics*, it could be called, although the reversal is perhaps a shade too odd. It would deal with the means whereby politicians held convictions are advanced, and what happens when two convictions are opposed. In such a book, sincerely, far from being peripheral, becomes the heart of the matter. A satisfying performance would no longer be Enderby's "nicely played hand", which a lot is achieved and nothing given away. Instead, one in which the participants do themselves in their true colours – even if, in the event, the display is fleeting, and the colours displayed are drawn from a cupboard in which several alternatives are held in store.

Such a study would still lie squarely within Professor Bailey's parent discipline, cultural anthropology, but it would be less vulnerable to certain sorts of complaint: to the claim that in concentrating so single-mindedly on tactics he allows his actors to present themselves as hollow or stunted, and even implies that beyond tactics and manipulations, there is nothing of significance within "the culture of passion" for the social scientist to describe.

Sensible sympathies

David Lodge

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220pp. Penfance and Nicolson. £8.95.
0297 783572

Finding a title for a collection of occasional essays and reviews is always a delicate and difficult task. A common solution is to choose some quotation which expresses either metonymically (*The Common Pursuit*) or metaphorically (*The Well-Wrought Urn*) the general tendency of the contents. Another is to allow the title of one item to stand, synecdochically, for the latter course, but instead of being placed at the beginning of her book, as is customary, the title essay is buried deep inside, a practice more familiar in collections of poems or short stories than in works of criticism. This, however, is entirely appropriate, since she is herself a distinguished exponent of the lyrical novel, and her criticism is as strongly stamped with her own distinctive sensibility, and composed with as much care and attention to the resonances of words and the rhythm of sentences, as her prose fiction. She is, indeed, a "lyrical" critic – the nearest equivalent we have to the Virginia Woolf of *The Common Reader*: that is, a critic who is as clever and well-informed as any academic, but free to write in a more personal and relaxed style; and who is able to exercise her own expressive skills without swamping or obscuring those of the writer under discussion.

The title essay, "Bartleby in Manhattan", is a good example. Hardwick begins by candidly explaining that she took up Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" again, hoping to get from it some material for a series of lectures on the subject of New York City, only to be drawn away from the environmental theme by the strange power of the character.

Bartleby's language reveals the all of him, but what is revealed? Character? Bartleby is not a character in the manner of the usual, imaginative, fictional creation. And he is not a character as we know them in life, with their bustling bustle of details, their suits and ties and felt hats, their love affairs surreptitious or blinding, family albums, psychological justifica-

tions dragging like a little wagon along the highway of experience.

Bartleby, hired as a copyist by the tale's narrator, a genial old lawyer, disconcerts his employer by refusing to carry out at first some, then all duties, with the polite, inscrutable formula, "I would prefer not to". Impervious to threats, remonstrations and even ultimate eviction, Bartleby increasingly obsesses the lawyer as an intolerable enigma, and in a strange way, as an accusing victim for whom he feels an irrational but ineluctable responsibility. Hardwick retells this story in language that vividly conveys the power and fascination of the original, but which is very much her own. Where the academic critic would quote and paraphrase, she metaphorizes:

[Bartleby's] first utterance is like the soul escaping from the body, as in medieval drawings . . . The laconic, implacable signature is at hand, the mysterious signature that cannot be misinterpreted and cannot be misunderstood. Bartleby replies, *I would prefer not to* . . . By the singularity of refusal, the absence of "because" or of the opening up of some possibly alternating circumstance, this negative domination seizes the story like a sudden ambush in the street. Bartleby's "I" is of such a completeness that it does not require support. He preserves his "I" as if it were a visible part of the body, the way ordinary men possess a thumb.

"Bartleby" is indeed the sort of story that makes deconstructionists' mouths water, an astonishingly early assault on the conventions and assumptions of the "classic realist text" (causality, "character", closure, etc.). Hardwick has perceived and communicated this quality in the text, but without having recourse to the tiresome jargon of deconstruction, or subscribing to its equally tiresome infatuation with the void. She enters with lively sympathy into the dilemma of the old lawyer, whose well-intentioned efforts to reclaim Bartleby for normality are politely rebuffed:

Family life: would the pudgy, homely daughter like to comb her hair, neatened up a bit, and apply for a position as a model? – and why not, others have, and so on.

This kind of critical discourse runs considerable risks: a very thin line separates it from the merely whimsical, the self-congratulatory or populist. But Hardwick has the tact and intelli-

gence to keep on the right side of the line. Her metaphorical embellishments and personal asides are means of giving the reader vicarious access to the text under discussion, not of thrusting the critic's sensibility and accomplishments between text and reader – unlike, say, the prose of Peter Conrad, whose *Imagining America* comes under devastating scrutiny in the last essay in this collection.

[Auden] died of a sudden heart attack in a hotel in Vienna, dispatched in Conrad's requiem ending of his chapter with "callous, merciful, American efficiency." Why callous, why merciful, why American?

Why indeed. This review carries all the more weight because Hardwick is not by nature a grudging or ungenerous critic, and much prefers to praise rather than blame. *Bartleby in Manhattan* is mainly a record of her enthusiasm and admiration for other writers – Simone Weil, Thomas Mann, Tolstoy, Melville, Ring Lardner, Thomas Hardy, Nabokov, among others (the sweep of time and space is impressive). Her negative responses, and negative rhetoric, are reserved mainly for the social, political and cultural criticism which make up a large part of this book. This, for instance, from an essay on Billy Graham and the whole phenomenon of American evangelistic religion:

Billy Graham's "ministry" and his life are circular. The circular life is concerned to defy distraction and temptation in order to return to where it started. Perhaps that is why Graham in his circlings often sounds like the orbiting astronaut, or it may be that they sound like him.

In the latter part of this essay, Hardwick reports the experience of watching two hours of Sunday morning religious television in a series of unforgettable vignettes:

Ernest Ampley, a dreadful and menacing faith healer. This dumpy little primitive in a wig specialises in screams and awful slaps to the head of sick Christians. Thump, "I command no more sugar in the

blood." Soon, he is pulling someone's deaf ear and saying, "See, he can hear." Then a back pain victim is slapped on his head, thump. "I dare yuh to find yuh back pain. Bend over any way yuh want. It's gawd."

If Hardwick is merciless in uncovering the ugliness of commercialized Christianity, she is also a shrewd, unillusioned observer of the permissive society.

Sex, sex – what good does it do to anyone to "study" more and better orgasms, to open forbidden orifices, to experiment, to put himself into the satisfaction laboratory, the intensive care ward of "fulfilment". The body is a poor vessel for transcendence. Satiety, in life, is quick and inevitable. The return of anxiety, debts, bad luck, age, work, thought, interest in the passing scene, ambition, anger cannot be deferred by lovemaking. The consolations of sex are fixed and just what they have always been.

Ours is an age of irony about romantic love. Hardwick suggests, and we take for granted the impermanence of relationships. "If we can trust fiction and film, our period is, like that of Restoration drama, comic . . . With the appearance of a large number of licentious works by women, even the cuckold has returned as a familiar figure in literature." (That slightly archaic use of "licentious" as a generic term, is masterly, simultaneously acknowledging and cutting down to size the Erica Jong of the current literary scene.) She notes in another essay, however, that "novels that are profoundly about illicit fornication have a way of ending on accidents, illness or death . . . there is a lingering puritanism somewhere, a mechanical accountability that links transgression with loss and grief".

The range of topics is wide: sexuality and religion, Oswald and Lardner, Selma and Brasilia, film and theatre, literary widows and the state of the novel. There is no common theme or thesis running through the contents of this book. Its unity is the unity of a sensibility wedded to a style, the one inseparable from the other.

BEYOND THE PALE

Sir Oswald Mosley 1933-1980

"Nicholas Mosley completes an extraordinary feat, that of combining his recollections of his own childhood, adolescence and early maturity with an account of his father both as a private and a public figure, without heroics, apologies or compromise and a public figure, without heroics, apologies or compromise with the truth as he now sees it . . . a remarkable book."

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John Charmley, *Sunday Telegraph*

"By incorporating in his father's biography an autobiography of himself . . . (Nicholas Mosley) presents a fascinating account of a junior officer in the London Irish Rifles and his campaign in Italy towards the end of the Second World War. Even more interesting is Nicholas's account of his relations with his father."

A.J.P. Taylor, *Observer*

£8.95

Secker & Warburg

The therapist and the comic

Anthony Clare

ROBIN SKYNNER and JOHN CLEESE
Families: and how to survive them
302pp. Methuen. £8.95.
0413 326402

The more interesting experience, in John Cleese's life to date has been a therapy group which he attended for three and a half years. In the company of nine other people he lowered his defensive barriers, endured a variety of unfamiliar emotional experiences and underwent a systematic examination of some of his most ingrained assumptions concerning personal relationships and human values. Five years later, a better man in his own eyes, however he may appear to others, he has decided that his discovery of new ways of thinking deserves to be shared with those who are likely to find them of interest but unlikely to have the need, time or inclination for therapy.

Mr Cleese's therapists were Robin Skynner and the wife of P.D. Skynner, a psychoanalyst who once specialised in family therapy at the Maudsley Hospital, and in my time there

he was affectionately regarded as someone who avoided psychiatric jargon and expressed forthright views about family relationships and roles. When Cleese suggested that the fruits of their collective therapeutic enterprise might usefully be disseminated in book form, Skynner agreed although, as we learn in the introduction, his decision owed more to his Uncle Fred, who had once rebuked of an earlier book by his nephew that it was the sort of book that made the reader realise that "it is all common sense".

The problem with *Families: and how to survive them* is that many readers will reach the same conclusions as Cleese and Skynner without undergoing the rigours of finishing the book. The very opening question (the format is question and answer with Cleese asking very direct questions and making very terse answers and Skynner providing very assured answers and making somewhat better gags) is a mixture of common sense, conjecture, anecdotal rumination and personal prejudice which provides the atmosphere and to a degree the content of the book. We do not learn very much about what it was that brought Cleese to Dr

Skynner although we do learn that Basil Fawcett was extremely depressed, which explains why he was nasty to Sybil and Manuel, and that Cleese, in addition to being a consummate comic actor, is an only child, was bullied when young, went to a public school and thought girls came from another galaxy. We also learn, (because, whatever his fondness for Freud, the Oedipus Complex and the unconscious, Skynner actually behaves like a human being and reveals a little of himself), that he came into psychiatry to help himself as much as to help others, is twice married and had a father who, if anything, was too kind.

Some of this is clearly important if we are to understand Skynner's philosophy but precisely what it is helpful for is by no means clear. By definition, common sense is unlikely to stir anyone's passions; parents should not indeed rush too quickly to relieve every childish discomfort men do indeed need to be able to admit to the occasional desire to be supported and babied; parents should indeed be able to fight with each other "as long as they love each other and can get together and compromise". Who inside or outside Skynner's therapy group would disagree? Those parts that are not common sense are, in the main, Skynner's

personal opinions and they are more controversial. "So long as it's done with love and for the child's own good" may indeed seem good sense to Skynner but it is a recipe which has justified all manner of parental mayhem; Skynner's ruminations concerning the therapeutic benefits of belonging to some movement or group immediately provoke the counter-argument that some ideological movements appear distinctly unhealthy to those courageous enough to withstand them. Feminists will not take me kindly to Skynner's forthright views on the need for decisive fathers willing and able to wield authority within the family, and his assertions concerning (inborn personality) differences between the sexes, may well provoke one little or not-so-little girl to behave in distinctly unladylike ways.

I think Dr Skynner might have been well advised to have resisted the blandishments of Mr Cleese and his Uncle Fred and refrained from putting down his working philosophy, whatever else we expect from the therapist, in the comic it is more than common sense. There is much to chew on between Cleese's jokes, Skynner's aphorisms and Basil Fawcett's uneven cartoons, as long as prospective readers don't expect too substantial a meal.

Name games

E. S. Turner

GAVIN EWART
Other People's Clerihews
With illustrations by Nicola Jennings
141pp. Oxford University Press. £5.95.
0192 298221

The clerihew, that bespattered stand-by of the literary competition, has been with us since the early 1890s, if one overlooks an accidental specimen discovered by Gavin Ewart in a letter by Jane Austen. This collection excludes the work of Edmund Clerihew Bentley himself but contains examples "by well-known writers and distinguished academics, including W. H. Auden, James Elroy Flecker, Peter Porter, John Sparrow, Terence Tiller and Edmund Wilson". One would have loved to hail a witty clerihew by Flecker, but the truth is that out of that company only Tiller earns a mention in despatches. As so often, Anon sets the pace and is bang on target in saying that whereas D. H. Lawrence talked about Florence, Compton Mackenzie would have said Firenze (Mackenzie was tricky about those who called "Capri Capree").

Gavin Ewart has relied heavily on entries in competitions. In recent times the week-end punsters have shown an unflagging lubricity. Ewart goes along with the trend, and says that clerihews are not for puritanical simpletons, but for sophisticated people. The verse by Paul Curry, Steele on Lewis Carroll opening his apparel (with a more-than-saucy phallic illustration by Nicola Jennings) is decidedly not for Mrs Whitehouse.

For the reader who does not mind seeing the dead wailed for the sake of a rhyme, this is a book. It has much delightful stuff in it, witty and brilliant in the best tradition of an art form

which looks as fatally easy as the haiku but can be vastly more fun. Like E. W. Fordham's "Miss Mae West/Is one of the best/I would rather not/Say the best what". This kind of critical discourse runs considerable risks: a very thin line separates it from the merely whimsical, the self-congratulatory or populist. But Hardwick has the tact and intelligence to keep on the right side of the line. Her metaphorical embellishments and personal asides are means of giving the reader vicarious access to the text under discussion, not of thrusting the critic's sensibility and accomplishments between text and reader – unlike, say, the prose of Peter Conrad, whose *Imagining America* comes under devastating scrutiny in the last essay in this collection.

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All-nuclear

Laurence Martin

PAUL BUTEUX
The Politics of Nuclear Consultation in NATO
1965-1980
292pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
0521 24798 5

The content of Paul Buteux's book is rather narrower than his title suggests, for it is essentially a history of the Nuclear Planning Group in NATO. To that is added an extremely helpful description of the actual mechanisms of nuclear control within NATO and a very fair, balanced and brief survey of the strategic issues involved in the debate over theatre nuclear weapons. The story is a detailed reminder that this debate has been absorbing the alliance now for over a quarter of a century and that it would consequently be naive to expect a resolution of the issues in the near future. They are much more likely to be recycled once again and we can at least find consolation by reflecting that so long as this abortive process continues, the alliance is serving its purpose.

It was no accident that the foundation of the Nuclear Planning Group in April 1967 virtually coincided with the formal adoption by NATO of the strategy of flexible response in December of that year. The essence of flexible response is ambiguity and, as Mr Buteux well shows, the NPG has been an instrument for keeping the ambiguity within the limits of mutual tolerance.

The basis of the Atlantic alliance is the redress of the European balance by American power and, while it is an error to believe that this power and the consequent dominance of the United States within the alliance are solely and it was realized that it was not possible to have nuclear weapons and announce a guarantee, it has been impossible to avoid

awkward questions about what would happen if the forces and strategy for employment should be maintained for that dreadful day.

Buteux shows us once more that there is no definitive answer to these questions. There are at least two reasons for this. In the first place, the context of the questions keeps changing as, for instance, the recent energetic Soviet effort to fill the erstwhile "theatre-nuclear" gap in their armoury has cast doubt on the adequacy of NATO's own provision to bridge that gap, and thereby given rise to our current agonizing over cruise missiles and Pershings. Second, and more fundamentally, the potential consequences of nuclear war and the wide geographical separation of Europe and the United States make it impossible that the interests of the Europeans and Americans, however similar, should actually coincide at all points in the strategic debate. The task is therefore to find words and a pattern of forces and plans that are not intolerable to any ally and any sufficiently coherent to give pause to the Soviet Union.

Efforts to get the answers too clear are normally counterproductive. This has been especially true of attempts to build mutual confidence on "hardware" solutions: Buteux reminds us that the NPG itself grew directly out of the abortive plans for a Multilateral Nuclear Force and we see something of the same today in the move towards "dual key". As Buteux points out, the United States can in any case wage nuclear war unilaterally with weapons far beyond anyone else's control. It is scarcely likely that if the Soviet Union feared such an attack was imminent and was tempted to take pre-emptive action, it would spare the cruise missiles merely in the hope that the United Kingdom would not cooperate with the United States on that day. The NPG, and its extensions the High Level Group, the Special Group and now the Special Consultative Group, have ensured that the outcome is compatible with European interests.

In providing a conduit for information, in reinforcing the American obligation and, indeed, inclination to consult, and in relieving European anxieties at least to the point at which they feel they have done all they can to control events, the NPG seems to have been a considerable success, in no small part by creating an atmosphere of routine that defuses transient crises of confidence. Of course its role should not be overrated: it is only natural that a book devoted to this institution should sometimes induce such a distortion and we need to realize that, had this device not been invented, no doubt some other mechanism would have sufficed. Moreover, the NPG could only handle a limited range of issues and to a limited degree; once that range and degree were exceeded, the debate split out into the more fragmented multilateral and bilateral jockeying we see over the cruise missile and Pershing. It is here that Buteux's failure to live up to the title of his book is most apparent, for the "politics" of the issues, the domestic strains, and the other, non-military sources of Allied friction and solidarity that provide the context of the nuclear debate are scarcely treated at all.

A minor thread in Buteux's book, to which he himself pays relatively little attention, is of particular interest in Britain today, though readers will vary widely in the moral they draw. This thread is the role of the independent European nuclear forces. As this history re-

calls, the difficult task of the NATO Europeans is to keep the American deterrent credibly harnessed to their security on acceptable terms. In this respect it is useful to be reminded that the process of consultation and mutual accommodation represented by the NPG began as an alternative to the MLF and that the MLF itself was an effort to forestall any German nuclear ambitions. If the United States ever decided to resolve some of its major strategic dilemmas by washing its hands of NATO, Europe's own nuclear potential might provide the only remaining alternative to Soviet domination.

Most Europeans would regard such a contingency as regrettable, dangerous and very probably unmanageable. But running through Buteux's story, if only by implication, is the theme that preventing Europe's nuclear potential from being realized in dangerous ways is one of the major interests impelling the United States to underwrite European security. Could this interest survive the demise of the existing European nuclear forces? Soviet efforts to drag those forces into the arms control negotiations may soon force us to confront the paradoxes this and other questions pose for European nuclear policy. Those with the patience to follow Buteux's painstaking narrative will emerge pretty well equipped for the complex debate that is doubtless before us.

At the sharp end

Geoffrey Best

HEW STRACHAN
European Armies and the Conduct of War
224pp. Allen and Unwin. £15 (paperback), £6.95.

The universal acknowledgment of the truth that the general has no doubt embodied civilians to write about it as much as nowadays they do. In principle, there seems to be nothing wrong or unscientific about this. Why should civilians who have never been in a war be expected to refrain from writing about it any more than soldiers who have never been in one (as most German soldiers in 1914 had not, Hew Strachan reminds us) are expected to refrain from having a go at it?

But the civilian entry into war studies may have brought losses as well as gains with it. The civilian may be intensely interested in everything that can come under the "War and Society" umbrella, increasingly fashionable since Arthur Marwick and his Open University history-men opened it up fifteen years or so ago. He is more likely to see deeper into the relations of war and politics than most purportedly a-political generals could ever do. But he is also unlikely to care of even, unless something of a *millière manqué*, to understand as much about the actual fighting itself, which is, after all, where the ultimately decisive things happen. Ethics, law, supply, economic foundations, political frameworks, sociological sources and consequences... such aspects have become brightly illuminated; somewhat to the detriment, argues Dr Strachan, of tactical and operational problems and solutions; an imbalance and disconnection which he here sets out to redress.

Obviously a good-natured man as well as an able, wide-minded scholar, and with some benefit, one supposes, from a spell at Sandhurst before his present Cambridge work, Strachan wastes no time on polemics or nit-picking. The Guides to Further Reading which follow each chapter recommend the better (English-language) books and simply omit mention of the worse; his historical appraisals in the main text of the better-known theorists of war are thrown and strong but never disrespectful, suggesting an attractive measure of tolerance of the weaknesses to which even superior flesh is subject, as well as a brooding sense of the tragic undertow of his theme.

The importance to him of those theorists (the usual list, but coming right up to Buchan and Brodie, Wohlstetter, Kissinger and Co) is less their intellectual brilliance (some were not so smart) than their celebrity and influence in their own age or subsequently as acknow-

ledged pundits: men with sufficiently olympic views as well as with enough practical knowledge of war to offer plausible and persuasive accounts of how all the available means of making war could best be used to achieve the ends (their readers would think worth pursuing).

But the theorists are only part of Strachan's concern. He is equally concerned with the great practical innovators - Marlborough, Frederick and Napoleon, Moltke and Sherman, De Gaulle, Guderian and Tukhachevsky and so on - who discovered new means and combinations of using the men and equipment at their disposal, and on the other with the great technical innovations which provided some of that equipment: eg, ship, aircraft, breech-loaders, tanks, monoplane fighters.

The Bomb. A tremendous amount of learning can be sensed between and beneath this book's lines as well as found lucidly in them as the author proceeds by forced marches through the years, persistently putting his troublesome questions: how did the leaders of military thought and action at that time think fit to use their men and weapons, given their scales of human values, their economic and social resources, and their political purposes? Infantry tactics and weapons-procurement at one end, *Welpolitik* and *Weltanschauung* at the other, similarly ambitious books have been written before, as Strachan generously points out, but his addition to the literature certainly has this justification among others, that no one hitherto has done so large a share of justice to what goes on "at the sharp end".

In such a study as this, involving much technical and professional matter not normally familiar to the common reader, one keeps a sharpened eye open for the author's handling of military vocabulary. Will this intersperse any sort of barrier to understanding? Hardly at all, I am glad to say. Strachan is blessedly pious almost all the time. Only once or twice driven to exclaim, and that was by the *Chapman's* "rubber obturator" on page 113. *Obturator*, indeed!

Pressed to judge which is the best chapter, I would point either to that on Clausewitz and the progressive misinterpretations to which he was subjected in Germany, France and Britain, or to the chapter on "The Revolution in Strategy" since 1945; remarkable exercises both in lucid and terse exposition, and the latter incidentally to be recommended to any one moved to find out what precisely the nuclear-armed powers have proposed to do with their dreadful darts, and why the Soviet Union's approach to them, a consistent part of its approach to the idea of war itself, is so different from that of the United States. The index is adequate, the Select Bibliography extensive. The battle and campaign maps are so-so - but when are such maps anything else?

Freedom and the collective

José Harris

W. H. GREENLEAF
The British Political Tradition:
Volume 1, The Rise of Collectivism
366pp. £22.
0416 15570 7
Volume 2, The Ideological Heritage
579pp. £26.
0416 34660 X
Methuen

Politicians and political theorists tend to divide into those who see society as a jungle and those who see it as a zoo. The central theme of *The British Political Tradition* is the prolonged duel between those two visions that has been fought in British institutions and intellectual history over the past hundred and fifty years. Few will be surprised by the author's claim that on the whole the zoo-keepers have had the best of it; but many readers may take issue with him about why and how this has occurred. Of the two volumes reviewed here (to be followed by two more as yet unpublished), the first deals with the historical circumstances that have made possible the expansion of state and bureaucratic controls. The second deals with the ideological tension between support for collectivism and support for libertarianism (often co-existing in the same political movements and even in the same persons) that has prevailed since the early 1800s down to the present day.

Of the two, I found the first volume, *The Rise of Collectivism*, much the less interesting and convincing. W. H. Greenleaf self-confessedly aspires to emulate A. V. Dicey; but as an analyst of long-term historical change he lacks both Dicey's genius for fashioning a wood out of a mass of unpromising trees and his illuminating flashes of inspired bigotry. The book gets off to a slow and turgid start, with much elaboration of footnotes to illustrate rather obvious points. The major new thesis is the growth of the state as diagnosed as five in number: the impact of war; the rise of industry; the introduction of mass democracy; the spread of "scientific" theories of knowledge; and an upsurge of Christian, humanitarian and aesthetic indignation which first drew attention to social evils and then demanded their amelioration by central and local government.

Parts of this analysis seem irrefutable: wars or the willingness to fight them are after all what states are for. But other parts seem either oversimplified or simply wrong. To take some obvious examples: industrialization, whilst undeniably in some circumstances provoking state expansion, has also acted as a powerful solvent of the mercantilist forms of state intervention prevalent in the pre-industrial age. An exaggerated belief in "scientism" is at least as marked in most classical and neo-classical models of economic behaviour as in the theories of interventionists. Mass democracy, whilst doubtless in some circumstances opting for collectivism, in other circumstances seems to be compatible with a high degree of libertarianism (as in many areas of public life in the United States). Even in Britain the equation between a mass electorate and the growth of public welfare programmes is by no means self-evident. After a century of statistics about the distribution of wealth and incomes, what is perhaps surprising about most working-class voters is not that they demand so much but that they demand so little. Certainly their expectations of government pale into insignificance when compared with the "hand in the till" prospect of the eighteenth-century British aristocracy. The role of "Christian-inspired philanthropy" seems "equally" problematic, seeing that Christians had been under a duty to love their neighbours for at least nineteen centuries before they thought of doing so through the medium of a welfare state. The mutation of philanthropy into collectivism surely begs the question which Professor Greenleaf wants it to answer: it is part of the problem which it is being called upon to explain.

Other important possible causes of modern state intervention receive scant attention - such as the growth and concentration of the population, changing family structure, and the corporatist self-interest of administrators and of the "training professions". Moreover, the polarisation between interventionism and non-interventionism seems to be a much more recent phenomenon than Greenleaf's theme is a fascinating one, and

tion seems to be much exaggerated: it is not difficult to think of examples (such as the Dalek-like self-replication of modern suburban high streets) in which the interests of planners and of free-marketiers appear to march hand in hand. Indeed, it would not be implausible to argue that the growth of the collectivist state has been largely caused by the growth of the free market - by the latter's erosion of the stable communities, charitable relationships and self-governing voluntary organizations on which the minimal state relied. Certainly it was the international free market in food (and not, as Greenleaf imagines, progressive Liberal death duties) that broke the mould of agricultural patriarchy which he sees as the keystone of pre-collectivist social life. Finally, one may perhaps question whether the traffic between individualism and collectivism has been all one way. The current market in sexual and private relationships must be "freer" than at any time since the fall of Babylon. Recurrent demands for an incomes policy, which Greenleaf cites as a touchstone of state paternalism, must be set against the fact that, in the face of intransigence from

he successfully persuades the reader to take seriously many individuals and lines of argument that do not figure prominently in more conventional discussions of modern British history. He provides a useful summary of the political thought of some major figures in English public life, and at the same time rescues from obscurity such once-notable polemicists as Lord Elcho, Anthony Ludovici and Ernest Benn. Attention is drawn to some of the latent contradictions within each of the major political traditions - notably the conflict within socialism between planning and free collective bargaining, and the conflict within liberalism between those who see freedom as want-satisfaction and those who see it as duty-fulfilment.

Perhaps the best section in the book is that on Conservative thought and the recurrent tensions between Tory patriarchalism and "financiers", "speculators" and "carpet-baggers" "creeping into the fold". Conservative pretensions to being a party "without ideology" are given short shrift - though Greenleaf maintains that the essence of Conservative philosophy is to articulate what people think already rather than the invention of new ideas. There are



The Prince of Wales visiting miners' wives and children in the North-east, 1928; from *Those Were the Days*: A photographic album of daily life in Britain 1919-1939 (231pp. Dent. £10.95. 0460045970).

workers who know their market-value, such policies have rarely been enacted and have always failed.

All these reservations meant that I moved on to the quarter of a million words still to come in *The Ideological Heritage* with flagging enthusiasm. However, in this second volume the pace quickens and the plot thickens. Greenleaf here sets himself the task of showing that no single political tradition has had a monopoly of collectivist or individualist values. Whatever current apologists may claim to the contrary, the liberal, conservative and socialist lineages in English public life have all had their iron-fisted authoritarianism, their solipsistic libertarianism and their earnest seekers after a modest and viable middle way. From Herbert Spencer to Beveridge, from the Webbs to Tony Benn, from Disraeli to Mrs Thatcher - within each tradition ideals of national efficiency have struggled with ideals of human diversity, and visions of the state as the most advanced social organism have competed with visions of the state as a mere residual keeper of the peace.

Between the three traditions there has been much convergence, overlapping and interchange of principles - hence "liberal Toryism", "stealing the Whig's clothing", "Lib-Labism", "progressivism", "Butskellism", and, most notably, the long process of mutual interpenetration whereby Conservatives have become the heirs of Manchester liberalism, Labour the party of autarky and protectionism. Clearly the Tories have been no less susceptible than Labour to the insidious pressures of "entryism" (a process traceable back to the 1690s and the crossing over of Robert Harley's Country Whigs). In all three traditions there has been a long-standing underground movement of moles burrowing away against the varieties of state power. Libertarianism makes strange bedfellows, and this movement has ranged from tax-resisting Tory squires through syndicalist shop-stewards, from hard-nosed entrepreneurs through to utopian communists, from Anglican and Catholic medievalists through to Nozickian professors of law who believed that all social evils could be remedied by private actions in contract and tort.

Greenleaf's theme is a fascinating one, and

some gaps in his discussion of recent scholarship (no mention, for instance, of John A. Hobson's work on Hobson's theory of "organic surplus value", which provided a powerful rationale for liberal progressive programmes of redistributive taxation). But overall, Greenleaf's references and footnotes are a valuable guide to past scholarship and to future lines of research. Recent graduates in search of untitled ground for a doctoral thesis might do worse than use him as a guide.

Nevertheless, *The Ideological Heritage* aspires not merely to be a work of reference and scholarship but to change our understanding of political reality, past, present and to come. From this point of view it seems to me deficient in several respects. One major problem is that the relationship between political thought and the central historical theme of the eclipse of individualism by collectivism is never adequately discussed. Greenleaf convinces one that "thinking about" the rise of collectivism has been an important part of recent British culture; but he does not demonstrate that ideas have been of any significance in either restraining collectivism or bringing it about. A second objection is that he too often lapses into name-dropping rather than systematic analysis: we learn, for instance, that he thinks Tony Benn is mainly significant as a follower of John Stuart Mill, but we are never told why.

Much of the book is devoted simply to chronicling what people thought rather than to subjecting their thought to systematic analysis. Much detail is added to our knowledge of the already fairly familiar individualism/collectivism dichotomy, but little is added to our understanding of conceptual issues. Where a critical stance is adopted it often tells us more about the author than about the thinker under review; we learn, for instance, that Twynney's work "was much overpraised and contained a notable element of meanness", though no reasons for this view are given. Moreover, for all its length the book contains some surprising gaps: There is no single reference to Popper or to Popper's attack on the logical basis of theories of planning; F. A. Hayek is described as the most profound analyst of libertarianism

since Herbert Spencer; but explication of Hayek's ideas is conspicuously absent. There is no mention of the Charity Organisation Society nor of the National Council of Civil Liberties - arguably as significant in the practical history of libertarianism as the Liberty and Property Defence League, which is discussed at length. Within the Labour Party there is no discussion of the ideology of "labourism", surely at least as important as more systematic theories of socialism, syndicalism and administrative collectivism. The valid point is made that many of the complaints directed by left-wing libertarians against capitalism should more properly be directed against industrialism in whatever form; but there is no corresponding discussion of that branch of modern libertarianism which finds expression in ecology, conservationism and "small is beautiful".

My most serious doubt about Greenleaf's study arises, however, over his central conception of organizing the study of modern British politics around the antinomies of "collectivism" versus "individualism", and "freedom" versus "state control". The difficulty with using "freedom" as a touchstone of political belief is that no one is against it. With the possible exception of Beatrice Webb, none of the grand interventionists in British public life has ever admitted that his or her ultimate aim was any other than to "set the people free". Intervention has always been pursued in the name of "higher freedom" or "freedom from want" or some other conception of freedom supposedly different from that of one's political opponents. Both legal regulation of trade unions and the legal immunities of trade unions are defended by their supporters in the name of freedom - as are both the maintenance of parental control over the sexual practices of children and the dismantling of that control. So it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there are potentially as many different conceptions

much weight as a bent pin. Similarly, the lines of demarcation which people draw between legitimate and illegitimate interventionism seem in the last resort to be almost totally arbitrary. Virtually none of the libertarians discussed by Greenleaf denied that collective action was desirable at some point - be it defence, law and order, regulation of the currency or prevention of starvation. Such lines of demarcation can only be defended by reference to some other principle - utility, natural law, human rights, etc; the lines in themselves are in no sense self-authenticating or self-explanatory. Moreover, it is striking that many people who have been hotly pro or anti-interventionism in one sphere of activity have frequently taken exactly the opposite view in some other sphere. Many mid-nineteenth-century laissez-faire liberals for example were strongly in favour of state prohibition of alcohol. Edwardian distributists who feared the "servile state" in the form of national insurance and old-age pensions, nevertheless required state action to redistribute land and property. In debates of the present day many who favour state intervention to regulate race relations oppose state intervention to regulate immigration - and vice versa. Many professional groups who support state subventions to the services which employ them (the NHS, universities, etc) nevertheless strongly resist threats of state interference in their codes of professional conduct. In my personal view the state should stop intervening to prevent gardeners from burning their bonfires, and should start intervening to stop farmers from burning the countryside - a distinction which I could support with good reasons, but not with reference to "individualism" versus "collectivism".

All these caveats make me doubtful whether Professor Greenleaf has really got to the nub of the conflict in Britain's ideological heritage. Other more profound and more intangible values than collectivism and libertarianism seem to me to be locked in combat in recent British history. Nevertheless, his approach is a powerful antidote to the Manichean posturings that pass for political thought in party manifestoes. *The Ideological Heritage* deserves to be widely dipped into, though it is perhaps unlikely to be widely read.

Prisoners of Hope

The Silver Age of the Italian Jews 1924-1974

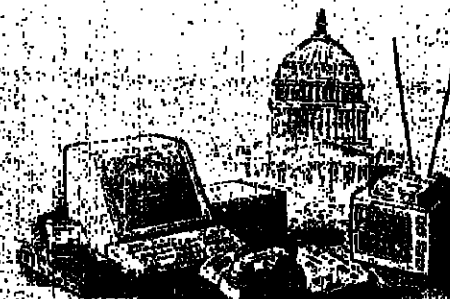
H. STUART HUGHES

What is left of identity when both language and religion are gone? As the most ancient minority of any sort in the Western world, Italy's Jewish community illustrates how a small group of distinguished, highly assimilated men and women can continue to treasure a tradition that is almost invisible to outsiders. H. Stuart Hughes takes as his text the work of six prose writers of Jewish or part-Jewish origin, and shows how they came to an awareness of their special character. The opening date, 1924, marks the earliest great literary success of an Italian Jew: Italo Svevo's *The Confessions of Zeno*. Svevo's attitude toward his origins are echoed in the early fiction of Alberto Moravia; to both the preservation of a Jewish identity seemed a futile enterprise. With the advent of fascism in the 1930s, the writers became more certain of their own Jewishness: common themes of imprisonment and exile haunt the work of Carlo and Primo Levi in *Christ Stopped at Eboli* and *Survival in Auschwitz*. Natalia Ginzburg's *Family Sayings* and Giorgio Bassani's rich oeuvre including *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini* depict with sympathy the vicissitudes of Italian Jews in their years of torment. The date 1974 marks the completion of this cycle of writing: the most remarkable outpouring - hence the "Silver Age" - of Italian Jewish creativity but be "prisoners of hope": a people with an "optimism... born of despair" in their yearning to blend the universal with their own identity. November 1983, £12.75

Technologies of Freedom

THIEL DE SOLA POOL

Will the current revolution in communications technology - cable, computer, videodisk, satellite - erode our basic rights of free speech? Or could it spearhead a history of the different modes of unfettered expression? Pool surveys the legal precedents and free speech have been defined and strengthened in the US over the past two hundred years. He also shows how technological factors have shaped very different legislative and judicial approaches to the postal service, telegraph, telephone and broadcast media, approaches involving political and economic regulation. Pool argues that technological change need not inevitably result in restrictive government regulations: considering it of overwhelming social importance, he challenges us to seize new opportunities to expand and enrich the traditions of free speech. November 1983, £17.00



Harvard
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Press

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tanks through the Soviet zone. The view of Sir Oliver Franks in June 1950 that Britain now exercised a unique international influence through its special relationship with the United States, its headship of the sterling area and the Commonwealth, and its leadership of western Europe would have commanded broad assent throughout the Labour movement at that time.

Bevin's foreign policy can be criticized on several fronts. It sometimes betrayed a strident nationalism, unpleasantly echoed in his wish to "see the Union Jack flying over the atomic bomb". It was deeply influenced by a traditional attachment to the cult of Empire (even if the 1950 Colombo Plan showed its more creative side). Bevin was unhappy about the transfer of power in India. He had an almost obsessive fascination with the Middle East, where the effect of his policy was to reinforce Britain's military presence east of Suez, and to continue the process of client relationships with friendly, if reactionary, Arab states. Bevin indeed regarded the preservation of Britain's special role throughout the Middle East as vital for national survival, for economic reasons in terms of oil supplies, for the strategic purpose of protecting the "lifeline of Empire" in Suez and along the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, and to ward off the threat of Soviet encroachment, real or (quite often) imagined. This could even lead to ideas of the post-1945 British commonwealth expanding rather than contracting. In 1945-6, Bevin vainly sought to set its bounds wider yet and wider, adding modern Libya and even perhaps Italian Somaliland to the imperial domain. Kipling had come again.

His Middle Eastern obsessions affected the one undoubted débâcle of his foreign policy — one undoubted tragedy of Palestine. Alan Bullock's Palestine issue was basically flawed. He failed to see the political, as against the religious, aspects of Zionism. He failed to see how the Zionist movement had been driven to a new pitch of intensity. His handling of the US government was too often elephantine, for all the erratic quality of the policies of a Truman administration deeply conscious of the Democratic Jewish vote in the cities. Palestine was a tragic mess in July 1945; it was even worse in May 1948 when Britain ignominiously withdrew, leaving no successor state of any kind in prospect and the certainty of a war for national survival in Israel. But in truth Palestine had been insoluble ever since the contradictory pledges given to Arabs and Jews after the 1917 Balfour Declaration by successive governments from Lloyd George to Churchill's. Bevin's faults in Palestine were, in the main, defects of style and presentation rather than of substance. Never was Bevin's inadequacy in dealing with the press and the machinery of public relations known to worse effect. He was, nevertheless, right in trying to involve a serpentine US government directly in any permanent settlement of Palestine. He was properly anxious to resolve the Palestine question as speedily as was practicable, to patch up relations with the Americans and to leave himself free to handle other, even more critical, problems in the Middle East, such as the dispute with Egypt over the Canal Zone. His instinct that any solution, partition or whatever, must be acceptable to Palestinian Arabs as well as to immigrant Jews was surely correct. Even Palestine, perhaps, is not wholly to his discredit.

He has also been attacked for his attitude towards European unity. But Bullock rightly points out here that the circumstances prevailing in 1945-51 should not be overestimated with those prevailing some years later. Bevin's hostility to the Council of Europe idea in 1948 and to the Schuman plan for steel and coal in 1950 had only an indirect bearing on whether Britain should have involved herself in the Treaty of Rome in 1956, or with the Common Market later on. It is clear that there was no economic, political or legal justification for Britain's joining in these French schemes for integration in the 1948-51 period, quite apart from the perceived socialist commitment of the British government. Bevin's lapses, then, are defensible. They do not affect

the majesty of the overall grand design. Those who have denounced him as an intransigent cold warrior should relate his responses to the quite monolithic intransigence of Soviet foreign policy in its later Stalinist phase, and the desperate need for direction in the post-war world. Bevin presided over a period of achievement unique in the history of British foreign policy, perhaps since the time of the elder Pitt. Alan Bullock's sober and dignified endorsement of his international policies is amply sustained by the detailed record he has so skilfully provided for us.

Hugh Gaiskell represented a strain in the Labour movement that Bevin naturally disliked — the middle-class, public-school Hampstead intellectual (reinforced by the distinct ethos of the Wykehamist which A. F. Thompson has admirably explained in a recent "Winchester Essay"). As Gaiskell delicately put it, he assumed that Bevin "felt shy and slightly antagonistic towards middle class people". Gaiskell's natural allies were centrist, civil-service planners like Plowden and Hall. His close friends were fellow economists like Durbin or Jay. He was in many ways an emotional, even flamboyant figure, but one can see why Aneurin Bevan liked to proclaim his own aristocratic tastes in preference to those of the humdrum bourgeois, Gaiskell. A much younger man, of course, Gaiskell was never close to Bevin or indeed to the working-class world, for all his WEA background and the miners' galas he attended while Minister of Fuel and Power, and his close relationship with a union boss like Sam Watson of the Durham Miners. Nevertheless, in foreign policy particularly, Gaiskell's career was largely to supplement that of Bevin, as this new edition of his diary amply shows, as Philip Williams has already provided us with an and in some ways even more valuable book, a quite superbly edited diary for the years 1945-56. The diary is a treasure trove of information.

His diary is a treasure trove of information, in a literal sense since most of it consists of summaries of days or even weeks written some short time after the events described. But, with all its limitations, it does provide an immensely informative and often entertaining insight into Labour's outlook in the post-Bevin phase, and it merits wide acclaim.

Gaiskell is most commonly associated with domestic economic policy-making, from the deliberations of the Dalton group in the 1930s down to the retreat from nationalization in the late 1950s. These themes, naturally, loom large in this diary, along with the endless, byzantine party disputes and manoeuvres that accompanied them, especially after 1951. The brotherhood of man seldom emerges in this account of a singularly unfraternal party. But much of the interest and freshness of this diary relates to foreign affairs. Gaiskell followed Bevin in being strongly pro-American, indeed far more passionately so than was the more pragmatic Bevin himself. From his discussions with the Americans over the EPU in the summer of 1950 onwards, Gaiskell felt totally at home in the company of American diplomats like Dean Acheson ("a sensitive and cultured mind"). Averell Harriman and George Kennan whose outlook he broadly shared. His first sharp conflict with his colleagues in the Attlee Cabinet came not over defence expenditure but over support for America's "Grand China" resolution in the United Nations in January 1951. Dalton felt Gaiskell's alarm at the alleged "anti-Americanism" of Strachey, Bde and other centrist colleagues at this time to be somewhat unbalanced. Gaiskell's commitment as Chancellor to the massive £4,700m rearmament programme embarked upon in the winter of 1950-1, which led ultimately to Bevan's resignation, was largely inspired by his passion for the Anglo-American alliance, rather than by pragmatic economic calculation. The outcome was his one and only budget in April 1951, which was both an economic and a political disaster. Not only did it cause a fatal rift in the Labour Party following the resignations of Bevan, Wilson and Freeman. It did considerable damage to Britain's exports, the pattern of industrial investment, and the balance of payments. It imposed strains on the

entire economy. The public records show us how civil service advice offered to the incoming Churchill administration in October 1951 severely criticized the costing of the original defence programme in the previous winter as being unrelated "to the world as it is". That programme had been seriously undermined as well by the subsequent Abadan oil crisis and the failure to obtain machine tools from America. Churchill responded by severe retrenchment of the defence budget, which made the original dispute over a mere £23m spent on National Health Service charges look pathetic indeed. By the start of 1952 it could truly be said that we were all Bevanites now. Gaiskell's enthusiasm for foreign affairs had led him into supporting a rearmament programme that, as John Valzey in his new book, *Breach of Promise*, rightly says, was economically impossible and militarily unnecessary. The same passionate Atlanticist approach continued to shape his outlook down to his memorable onslaught on Eden's policy at the time of Suez.

Alongside this pro-Americanism came a strong moral commitment to the Commonwealth and, partly for that reason, a relative distaste for the more integrated or federalized view of European unity. Gaiskell's last months, in 1962-3, long after this diary had come to an end, were occupied with steering his party away from a commitment to the Common Market and in discussing contingency plans, including possible military action, to prevent a possible breakaway by a racistist white régime in Rhodesia. In these broad directions, not without mishap, Gaiskell continued Bevin's commitment to the Atlanticist version of multi-racial, socialist internationalism. In domestic policies, there was in practice much less difficulty for him. Labour had been committed to the mixed economy and a strictly controlled economy since its long before Morrisonian "consolidation", or the 1957

TO, nuclear weapons, Europe — which caused nearly all the turmoil within the Labour Party during the Bevanite years, and it is here that the fascination of this diary particularly lies.

Gaiskell, an attractive, intelligent, courageous and warm-hearted man, had his real limitations, as his diary shows. It is studied with a series of harsh judgments on parliamentary contemporaries such as Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, James Griffiths or Michael Foot. While Gaiskell was sorely used and abused by some of his colleagues, the intellectual elitism, verging on arrogance, that those entries reveal is more illuminating than attractive. One of the themes that come across with much regularity is Gaiskell's relative detachment from the party outside parliament, at least until he first entered the NEC when elected party treasurer in 1954. In April 1951, Hugh Dalton shrewdly commented, with reference to Gaiskell's latest attacks on Bevan and his public standing, that his protégé "thought too little about the Party & too much about the electorate in general". There is much to support such a view for the period up to 1956 in this diary. Nor did his outlook fundamentally change thereafter, as the disastrous miscalculation over the party's reaction to the retention of Clause Four in the party constitution in late 1959 amply confirms. As Harold Wilson has said, he was by temperament an administrator, not a politician. Gaiskell's limitations were shown most graphically in his persistent hostility towards Aneurin Bevan, right down to the time of Suez. It is perhaps unfair to the reputation of both men that the reconciliation of the 1957-9 period, when Bevan served as shadow foreign secretary, does not appear in this diary. Certainly, Gaiskell did recognize Bevan's talents and charisma — "he will be Prime Minister one day", he recorded in June 1948. But he also saw him as ruthless, over-emotional in a Welsh way, volatile and dangerous: on one extraordinary occasion, he is led to compare Bevan to Hitler. Naturally, there was a profound personal incompatibility between these two gifted Labour leaders: as Peter Shore recently pointed out (though he failed to add that in the practical financial issues in April 1951 Bevan was right and Gaiskell wrong). But it remains a testimony to a lack of imagination or

intellectual flexibility on his part that Gaiskell failed to retain within Attlee's declining Cabinet the party's most inspiring practitioner and prophet of democratic socialism. He compounded the error by reacting over-strongly to Bevan's admittedly destructive and rebellious conduct in 1954-5 and trying to drive him out of the party altogether. Eventually Gaiskell was saved from himself by the tortuous comings and goings of two obscure trade unionist members of the NEC who were Moral Rearmament. All this reinforces doubts about Gaiskell as a party leader. But there can be none about his capacity as an executive minister or his potential as a distinguished future prime minister. During the devaluation crisis in July-August 1949 he showed an insight and decisiveness which led to rapid promotion to high office and eventually to the party leadership, vaulting over his rival, Harold Wilson, who had hesitated over sterling. Above all, Gaiskell as premier would have continued to enhance the authority of the Labour Party in international affairs, and in alleviating the tensions and sterility of the cold war. He reinterpreted the religion and the language of socialism, with a style and a sensitivity that made men like John Valzey love him. He remains deeply missed down to the present time.

Bevin and Gaiskell both felt badly assured about social democracy and British unique role in creating it. They both found socialism with libertarian and pluralist values, indeed, did Aneurin Bevan himself. Like Bevan too, they saw their beliefs as a product both of modern society and of relativist philosophy. It is, however, a tradition on which John Valzey, a lapsed Gaiskellian subsequently ennobled in one of Harold Wilson's honours lists, looks back with dismay. He offers challenging vignettes of five men, three practitioners of social democracy, Gaiskell, Tony Blair and Richard Titmuss, two leading

of Butlerism, Keynesianism and liberalism are all held to be ultimate failures in that they applied the conventional wisdom prevailing in 1945 to the very different problems facing Britain after 1950, with disastrous results. No intelligent person will fail to respond to Valzey's unease at our current social and economic condition. But whether the patchwork alternative agenda he offers, essentially based on social inequality and the market economy, is more acceptable cannot adequately be gleaned from his slim and over-dogmatic pages. How his programme would have begun to provide full employment or a fabric of social welfare after 1945 is not explained. The working class is barely a walk-on part throughout the book: yet they, too, live in NW3. Despite the disillusionment and scepticism of their later critics, therefore, Bevin, Gaiskell and their colleagues still offer a living inheritance of a humanized welfare democracy and an internationalist commitment overseas. There was a rough confidence and strength about their Britain in 1945-51, buffeted though it was by external economic difficulties. The essence of that society, its vision and its values, remains its validity today, for all our present doubts, and the latter-day Burkes, Bourgeois and doubting Hugh Thomases who give them credence.

Socialism and European Unity: The Dilemma of the Left in Britain and France by Michael Newman (292pp. Junction Books. Paperback £5.95, 0 86245 104 3) deals with the development of the European Community as a factor for socialist policies since the Second World War. The book begins with a history of the Fourth Republic in France and the notion of modernization without consensus and ends with a chapter on the Labour Party and the EEC, 1974-81. "Renegotiation, Referendum and Withdrawal" (1958-71). "The Impact of Gaullism, 1958-71". "Social Contemporary Left and Europe: Synthesis or Acceptance of the Status Quo?" "Labour, Europe and the World: The Post-War Labour Government and West European Integration". "From Splendid Isolation to Gaullist Veto, 1951-63" and "Labour and the EEC, 1964-72: From Consequence Politics to the Politics of Dissent". A "Conclusion" examines the problems posed by West European integration for the Left in France and Britain and issues of cross-nationality and socialism.

Perfectionist Boy

Frances Spalding

HELEN BINYON
Eric Ravilious: Memoir of an Artist
144pp. Lutterworth. £15.
0718825910

The artist Vivian Pitchforth once introduced the subject of this memoir as "Ravilious who sells all his pictures; he and [Edward] Bawden are a proper couple of Ethel M. Dells — only better aesthetically". A "fastidious and assimilative" artist, as Douglas Bliss observed, Ravilious had impeccable standards: he is said to have rejected two out of every three watercolours that he painted and, as this book illustrates, would, if necessary, substantially rework his wood engravings until he had perfected the design. There is a consistent nicety in his and Bawden's art which leaves the impression that they ventured only where they knew they would succeed. Kate Flint, reviewing Freda Constable's *The England of Eric Ravilious* (TLS, November 26, 1982), felt his view to be tame and selective. His constricted vision may explain why, until recently, he has not received the attention he deserves, for he was not only a brilliant designer but he also succeeded in his ambition to revive the English watercolour tradition. Moreover his varied oeuvre is unusually integrated, his experience of wood engraving and colour lithography feeding the development of his watercolours. Whether designing a book illustration or a mural painting, a London Transport poster or a pattern for ceramics, he engendered a satisfying compactness, a density that is nevertheless airy and light.

But his is not the vision of a domestic artist. Unlike Bawden, who found enough subjects

for his purpose in the Essex village where he lived, Ravilious thrived on a sense of displacement. He produced his best watercolours in areas far from home and was fascinated by the intrusion of machines, beached in unexpected places. His view of England may be selective, but it is never cosy or complacent. His landscapes are mostly seen under a chill, grey sky; and when the sun does appear in one corner, it rarely warms the scene. Understated melancholy is most clearly felt in his "R.N.A.S. Sick Bay, Dundee", in which light from the window spreads gently across the empty bed, the chair and wooden walls, ceiling and floor, while outside seaplanes silently glide past. More usually his interiors, like his landscapes, make use of an angular recession which leaves his designs taut and strained. Even when he sets out to charm, as in his wood engravings for the 1933 Kynoch Press Note Book, his vignettes, which imitate Bewick, lack the fullness and earthiness they celebrate.

If Ravilious was very much of his period, reflecting a 1920s decorative sense and fragile nostalgia for the English idyll, he was also a complex individual. Helen Binyon first met him when both were students at the Royal College of Art and her personal memoir makes a welcome addition to the scant literature on this artist. Richard Morphet contributes an introduction which, in its combination of meticulous consideration and original thought, draws out unexpected links, between Ravilious and Mass Observation or Ben Nicholson, for example; it also situates Ravilious more firmly within his art-historical context than did Freda Constable's earlier essay. The main body of the text contains considerable new information about Ravilious's life and career, but it is fundamentally lacking in the kind of insights



Eric Ravilious's "Dangerous Work at Low Tide", reproduced from *The England of Eric Ravilious* by Freda Constable (38pp, 64 plates. Scolar Press. £8.95, 0839675315).

that such a memoir should give. He still lives more vividly in J. M. Richards's *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella*, where he is described as suffering from a "confusion of purpose" during the late 1930s, a condition resolved by war and the commissions it brought. Previously, as Richards records, "nothing seemed settled or secure", but neither he nor Helen Binyon are able to explain Ravilious's loss of direction. Nor does Helen Binyon, who died in 1979, admit to her affair with Ravilious, which Richard Morphet tells us lasted from 1934 to 1938. And though we learn a great deal more about the artistic circle in which Ravilious moved, the precise nature of the creative exchange between him and Bawden is still

Binyon for compiling this book, enriched by her own memories and those of their friends as well as extreme quotations from Ravilious's letters. It describes, if it does not fully recreate, the life of an exceptionally talented artist, whose love of innocent entertainment and humour earned him the nickname "the Boy" which, while his watercolours moved towards greater maturity, suggested his inability to grow old. The book is, moreover, generously illustrated, a black-and-white or colour illustration appearing on almost every other page. The text ends abruptly, with a letter Ravilious wrote from Iceland, followed by a photograph of the barren countryside over which his

An all-conserving greed

Tom Phillips

RUSSELL CHAMBERLIN
Loot: The Heritage of Plunder
240pp. Thames and Hudson. £8.95.
0500013063

The vexed question of restitution of works of art to their countries of origin is raised by Russell Chamberlin but, as one might guess from the journalistic title and scissors-and-paste dust-jacket of his book, it is not gone into very deeply. He is a story-teller and give us a popular selection of examples of what the French, moving quickly to avoid the coinage "bonapartisme", have called "eigisme". The Elgin Marbles (like Molina Mercouri) get star billing, and in Chamberlin's fascinating account of their appropriation and subsequent sale, Elgin himself emerges as a quasi-tragic figure. His original intention was to garnish his newly built and fashionably neoclassical mansion with the real thing and, by 1803, seventeen figures from the Parthenon pediments, fifteen metopes and a column from the Erechtheum were, inter alia, ready to ship in 200 stout boxes labelled Broom Hall, Scotland. On his return to Scotland in 1805 (having been delayed as a prisoner, and hostage in the Napoleonic wars) he found that his wife had run away with another man and that he had lost his seat in the House of Lords. Despite the praise of Canova (whom we have to thank for telling Elgin that it would be "sacrilege" to restore or tamper with such masterpieces) and the enthusiasm of such commissioners as Fuseli (who strode around the galleries exclaiming, "De Greeks were Godless, de Greeks were Godless!"), Elgin ended up having to sell the works to the nation at less than half of what it had cost him to bring them here.

The other stories dealt with by Chamberlin are as various as their ethical implications are simple. A brisk account of Egyptian archaeology (the name given to the more scholarly kind of looting until quite recent times) is followed by tales of appropriated Royal paraphernalia like the crown of St Stephen, the Gold Stool of the Ashanti and the Stone of Scone. Then come the conquerors, Napoleon and Hitler, the latter in a neck-and-neck race with Goering to amass the rarest and the best. Loot for the Reich (and the vast museum he

planned to erect, looming for Goering down the stomach-turning "City of Blood", is given the usual sensational résumé and, apart from a short epilogue, the book ends with a red herring in the form of the Codrington Papers: a simple case of private property being sold on the open market. Although the Antiquarians raised £40,000 (from a population of only 70,000) in an attempt to acquire these key documents of their history from that sugar planter's heirs, access to the content is the only crucial issue; the rest is romance.

Many chances are missed of more up-to-date and pertinent matters. In the field of African art alone an account of the strange movements of statues which were restored to the country of origin after pleas for their return as sacred objects, only to reappear on the American market, would have introduced one of the problematic aspects of the subject; as would the story of the West African Museum, donated (with its contents) by an American collector, which now stands virtually empty behind well-guarded gates. My own experiences as a collector of African sculpture have not helped to clarify the issues. Malpractices abound, yet one can often find oneself rescuing objects of great quality from their abandonment to terrible fates or from being jettisoned, as Islam (which forbids the making and deprecates the keeping of human representations) replaces animism in its sweep across the continent. My own guess is that well over half of the African art now enriching the museums and private collections of Europe and America would not have survived at all, had it remained in its country of origin. Greed can be one of conservation's most effective tools; and although Nigeria has fine, scholarly and well-administered museums, the same cannot be said of most West African nations.

Loot is simply if unevenly illustrated, relying too heavily both on obvious picture-library material and easily available colour transparencies, sometimes misleadingly captioned, as in the colour plate of the Ashanti topknot chief where the huge handles of the ceremonial swords are surely of gilded wood rather than of "gold". This is not the book that the heat of the current controversy demands. It is none the less a generous and entertaining dip into the anecdotal treasury of the fate of treasure.

Over 1900 years of female achievement

The Europa Biographical Dictionary of
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Over 1000
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Europa Publications Limited
100, Victoria Road, London W14 7JF, England

Handwritten note: 1983/11/11

COMMENTARY

Eyes on the play

David Nokes

JOHN VANBRUGH
The Relapse
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

From the first, Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* was conceived as a star vehicle, though the star was not Colly Cibber, *alias* Sir Novelty Fashion, *alias* Lord Foppington, but rather Lord Foppington's periwig. This remarkable creation made its stage debut in Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, brought on in a special sedan chair by two footmen to ecstatic applause from the audience. Vanbrugh's play, the sequel to Cibber's, reintroduced many of the original characters including Loveless, Amanda, Sir Novelty (here ennobled to Lord Foppington) and, of course, the periwig. Both Cibber and Vanbrugh successfully identified a shift of mood among their audiences, a new uxorious sobriety which found expression the following year in Collier's *Short View of the Immorality of the Stage*. *Love's Last Shift* and *The Relapse* comedy (it should more accurately be entitled sentimental comedy) when Hymen regularly trounced Cupid, connubiality outlived concupiscence and wigs became more important than wit.

William Gaskill, director of the latest revival of *The Relapse* at the Lyric Hammersmith was brought up in the Royal Court tradition of writers' theatre and consequently has little interest in elaborate stage business or production effects. To be sure, there is a wig in this production which makes its entrance on a modest stage like a comet, but Gaskill's production is lowly still complains of its meagreness. His fear, he later confides, is that he should cut "so nauseous a figure in the side-box, the ladies should be compelled to turn their backs on the stage." Gaskill's production is a

In some ways it is refreshing to see a "Restoration" comedy produced in such an unvarnished, not to say austere manner. The sets are simple sepia backdrops of London scenes with a bare minimum of props. The characters are dressed in homely fabrics, sober browns and greys, to emphasize Foppington's apparentness.

Homage to an absent diva

Stephen Pickles

La Traviata
Odeon, Haymarket

Zefferelli's stage production of *La Traviata* is legendary. Gilda's Violetta, acting the part with all the desperate urgency and intrinsic pathos shown in her own public and private lives. No one must sense her absence in this film more than Zefferelli. In a letter to her (June, 1958) he wrote of a "moral exigency" to have a living and perfect documentation of the spectrum of your possibilities as a great artist, in the years of your splendour as a woman. As if placing her under some personal obligation he confided that the project was a lifetime's ambition. Personally, I believe that for the rest of my days I will reproach myself if we do not succeed in capturing how on three thousand metres of film, your "Traviata" she never agreed.

The justification for filming opera is either to immortalize a great performance, or to create with cinematic resources and skills what cannot be achieved on stage. Opera, however, insists on such heightened reality that location work tends to intrude, speaking prose where there is poetry, photographing landscape instead of painting it. Though in this film we have the easy demonstration of Zefferelli's cinematic imagination the worst moments are chocolate-brown, unnecessary cross-cut to Alfredo's sister - all sad soft-focus, and Alfredo's pathetic, self-pitying mood in the country. The happiness of Alfredo and Violetta is

as a Lely among Hogarths, a peacock among pigeons. But by requiring us to take this play seriously, rather than as a costume romp, Gaskill runs into certain difficulties. Written in less than three months, *The Relapse* is derivative in details and uncertain in tone. The extensive eulogies on the state of matrimony which open and close the play lend the intervening intrigues a more than usually perfunctory air. Shifts of character, such as the sudden onset of lust or reformation, are signalled, like twists in the plot, by the repeated use of clumsy asides. Nor is the language remarkable for wit, Vanbrugh's predilection being for windy extended similes and for hyperbole which all too easily collapses into cliché. A typical difficulty arises in Act V when the lascivious Worthy (Nick Henson) finally attempts to seduce Loveless's virtuous wife Amanda (Lorna Heilbron). For just a moment it seems that she may be tempted ("Oh whither am I going?") but instantly she recovers and declares "My forces rally bravely to my aid, and thus I gain the day." Worthy, who is immediately chastened by her virtuous example, exclaims that he is "a raging lion at your feet, struck dead with fear". Such a declaration may be rendered ironic, or comic; but a degree of stylization or symbolism is required to make it carry conviction. Gaskill's restrained realism gives little dramatic force to such a stubbornly implausible scene, and although the actors struggle valiantly, Worthy seems less like a lion tamed than a spaniel tickled.

What this production lacks is any overall sense of interpretation. It is slow-paced - too slow for some of the comedy - and strangely static. Even when he is shackled with chains (a comic device, Gaskill gives us the play uncut and uncluttered. But the result is a production which seems less like a lion tamed than a spaniel tickled.

classist who remains every inch a beau despite being garished with fetters and powdered hair while attempting to cross a picturesque log-bridge. Things are better indoors. The great set-pieces dazzle with Zefferelli's customary theatrical flair. Bolshoi dancers help in the ball scene, the extras enjoy themselves with characteristic energy, and when a principal's aria or a duet demands their attention, that most difficult of conventions is observed without loss of individuality. This is opera production at its best. The camera is secondary, a tool in the hands of a theatrical master rather than a toy being shown off by a whiz-kid.

But the story concerns more than the gay life. Duques's heroine grasps hopelessly after happiness and is doomed to die of consumption. Character is fate, and the brief moment of natural and consummate passion is merely an exquisite digression for Violetta before death takes her into the pantheon of fictional immortals. There is not much time in Verdi's opera. Music sets the pace for the smallest casual remark as well as for the grandest lyrical appeal. It restricts yet it deepens. We are moved before we can understand the occasion, and our complicated feelings soon reject facile characterization, however beautifully sung. Violetta's aria with rare sobriety in this strains technique. She manages to interpret as well as sing, and has a fascinating presence which Zefferelli allows to pervade the opening scene while the prelude plays, as in a dream. Her apartment is being inhabited even as she

A family frivolity

Edward Mendelson

VIRGINIA WOOLF
Freshwater
New York University Theatre

The most improbable triumph of the New York theatre season has been the production in French of a play Virginia Woolf wrote in English to amuse Bloomsbury. Many mountains laboured to bring forth this charmingly ridiculous mouse. The cast includes Eugene Ionesco, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Nathalie Sarraute. The local sponsor is the Center for French Civilization and Culture of New York University. Foreign sponsors are the British Council, L'Association Française d'Action Artistique and Le Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication.

Freshwater conflates real and imaginary incidents from the lives of Julia Margaret Cameron (Virginia Woolf's great-aunt). George Frederick Watts and Alfred Tennyson. Mrs Cameron and her husband await the arrival of the coffins they insist on taking with them to India. Ellen Terry, tired of posing as Modesty for her husband Watts, runs off to Bloomsbury with a naval officer. Tennyson recites *Maud*, inaccurately. At the end Queen Victoria arrives to confer the OM on Watts and a peerage on Tennyson. Virginia Woolf wrote a long-winded version of the play in 1923, abandoned it in a drawer, and made a sprightlier version for a production at a party given by Vanessa Bell in 1935. The original cast, like the script, was a family affair, starring Leonard Woolf, Vanessa and Julian Bell, Duncan Grant, with miscellaneous Stephens. The two versions were first published in 1976, then translated by the translator in 1981 (Paris: Editions des

The translator makes heavy weather of this title - "*Freshwater*" que nous remercions le ciel d'avoir encore besoin - une nouvelle confirmation de la bêtise et de la brutalité masculine. The text itself provides a voice for "In supreme subversion, sur notre champ de bataille intérieur". The New York cast takes it all more lightly. The farce is broad. The music is by Sullivan. Everyone dances. Watts receives, instead of the OM, l'Ordre de la Beauté.

lies in hopeless longing for Alfredo's return. A modest boy, enraptured by one of her portraits, is drawn to the room where she is dying, and opens the door. Their eyes meet, a pathetic encounter, and he leaves as she struggles to rise. She then wanders slowly through the shadowy room, out into the corridor, her mind filled with a confused babble of gaudies gone by. This sequence is a sort of homage to the absent Callas. The long straggling hair, blue-blackened sleepless eyes, filmy nightgown and pale ghostly presence - all are hallmarks of that earlier definitive performance, a spectre not exorcised but lovingly admitted.

Domingo as Alfredo lends handsome support in a story which he is powerless to arrest, in which he struts with slighted indignation and misplaced seriousness. It is Cornell MacNeil as Germont who disappoints in a manner one is used to seeing every day on the operatic stage. It is partly the opera's fault, creating a role perhaps too incredible to come alive unless it is brilliantly acted and sung. He does neither well, and in the pivotal scene where he asks Violetta to renounce Alfredo, the tension and anguish struggle for definition as Stratos does her best to resist the miserable inevitability of moral and domestic demands. On stage, Cornell MacNeil is a magnificent role, made powerful by Verdi's theatrical sense than by any detailed psychology. Here Violetta would not have given a damn, had the libretto not said otherwise. The "spectrum of possibilities" which Zefferelli worshipped in Callas's artistry is only fleetingly glimpsed in this *Traviata*, though much of it is

Freshwater proves far more attractive in French than in English. The self-congratulatory iconoclasm of the original, its air of Eminent Victorianism, give way in translation to a mood of objectless frivolity. Names like Bloomsbury and Gordon Square shed their earnest status as in-jokes and become equivalents of Cloudcuckooland and Cockayne. Tennyson, Watts and the Camerons are no longer ancestral shades, relentlessly exorcised, but figures of pure nonsense.

In a production like this, acting ability matters less than a transparent eagerness to please. Simone Benmussa's direction offers eagerness all round. Some professional ballast is provided by Florence Delay, the lead in Bresson's film *Jeune d'Arc*, as Ellen Terry precise a mouse and mien, and extremely fetching in semi-diaphanous dress. Eugene Ionesco, supposedly Tennyson ("le célèbre symboliste", explains the translator), looks more like Father Christmas in mourning for one of his elves, and presides benevolently. Alain Robbe-Grillet as Charles Hay Cameron mugs and beams with agreeable emphasis; the only line the author's *Projet pour une révolution à New York* seems unable to remember is "De foi, d'espérance et de charité". Two New Yorkers join the company: Tom Bishop as the naval officer brings touch of American earnestness to the prevailing frolic, while David Noakes convincingly mimes the role of a porpoise.

The casting of Nathalie Sarraute (aged eighty-three according to francophone references, eighty-one or seventy-eight according to anglophone ones) in the invented part of Julia Butler has a lucky aptness, as the line given to her character from the abandoned 1923 version echo the visionary speeches of captain Shover in *Heartbreak House* - which Virginia Woolf had seen late in 1919. *Freshwater*, seems something of a burlesque on Shaw's play. Joyce Mansour plays Mrs Cameron in the mood of Hesione Hushabye; Florence Delay's Ellen Terry has the hymeneal resolution of Ellie Dunn; the baffled idealism of Maxine Dunn reappears in Guy Dunn's George Frederick Watts. And the arrival - loud and astonishing - of Jean-Paul Aron as Queen Victoria, in make-up that could stop a clock, takes the place of the bombs.

Freshwater will be presented by the same cast at Riverside Studios on November 26 and 27.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of November 9, 1933, carried the following review of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* by Gertrude Stein:

It is possible that Miss Stein's philosophical training in America contributed to her elegant method of statement. Among the students of her time William James gave her the highest marks, but it was because she wrote in her examination, "Dear Professor James, I am sorry but really I do not feel a bit like the examination paper in philosophy to-day," and then left. She also studied psychology and published papers on the subject; but her work on automatic writing, as she herself tells us, led to their individual mode of composition for which she is chiefly known. Here she does not write in this manner, but instead cultivates an extreme flatness and simplicity of statement, a naïveté which is sometimes carried to the point of indifference to grammar, and yet with an undercurrent of alyness. It is a style calculated to baffle the inquirer. Her wit is so remote from cleverness that it is sometimes impossible to be sure whether it is intended, and her wit is so serious remarks are often so odd that it is doubtful whether they are not ironic. Miss Stein describes how she succeeded in "flouting" a philosopher by arguing that the "Bible" needed to learn Greek because Greek "was not" might have been an island. But still she does not say whether the argument was seriously intended or merely meant to provoke. And the same evasiveness whenever anything approaching an intellectual idea or generalization turns up in her book will surely miss the reader, and for all one can tell may be meant to do so.

The machinery of delight

Martin Kemp

Drawings by Raphael
British Museum, until January 15

Is it possible to write about Raphael without involving the near-obligatory comparisons with Leonardo and Michelangelo? And is it possible to avoid the implicitly or explicitly defensive tone which such comparisons have evoked in the modern literature on Raphael? In this review I should like to answer emphatically yes to both questions, though the fact that I have felt obliged to raise them at the outset is an acknowledgment that they cannot be altogether dismissed.

On the great preponderance of so many different artists and critics during the three centuries after the artist's death really have been wrong when they took Raphael as their supreme exemplar of artistic excellence? It is easy to imagine the brilliant drawings in this exhibition meeting with the approval of a Watson no less than a David. Raphael's graphic range extends from a delicate romantic sensibility of a deeply human kind to an unyielding rigour of intellectual control which would satisfy even the most dogmatic Poussinist. Perhaps it is the very fluidity of his unrivalled responsiveness to different artistic demands which arouses our modern suspicions. Somehow every varied solution exudes an air of rightness which is (or should be if we were properly attuned) both surprising and inevitable. This inevitable rightness, this apparent state of perfect intellectual and aesthetic poise, has become so familiar as to lose something of its original sense of excitement. Perhaps Ingres was right to identify Raphael with Mozart; the modernist who much of a canonical technique that we tend to take them for granted as classic norms.

But it is better to forget about such received values and just to look at the drawings. No one has ever been more adept in playing the delicious perceptual game between line as a form of seductive surface motion and as evocative of plasticity and space. Raphael's drawn *oeuvre* probably contains more candidates for the world's most beautiful drawing than any other artist's. From the present exhibition, I suggest that the black chalk study of "Poetry" would take some beating.

The organizers rightly stress that drawing was a functional, specifically-directed activity for Raphael. In this respect his procedures share more with quattrocento practice than the "background research" of the type represented by Leonardo's nature drawings or Michelangelo's studies of the human figure. Only rarely, as in the unexpectedly severe and brutal studies connected with the Borghese "Entombment", do the drawings stand outside the direct compositional requirements of the task in hand. His drawing was a complex process of pictorial engineering. Each component was designed, tooled and polished to function in precise unison with the other.

A summer of decisions

Elizabeth Winter

ANTON CHEKHOV
The Cherry Orchard
Theatre Royal, Haymarket

The timespan of *The Cherry Orchard* is about six months. But the period referred to by the characters covers the whole of Anton Chekhov's life. He was born in 1860 - one year before the emancipation of the serfs (the "celebrity" as Mrs. Gurov repeatedly calls it) - and died within a few months of his first performance - one year before the first revolution of 1905. Questions about the future of Russia were still open. Would it move towards greater democracy? Would it become a developed capitalist state? The disparate characters brought together for a brief summer of decision-making, while universal in the interplay of their moods, self-deceptions and affections,

working parts of the machine as a whole. Yet equally it is difficult not to feel that drawing was an exercise of delight in its own right. For example, the so-called "auxiliary cartoons" - full-scale studies of details, mainly heads, made from the first a special value as exemplary drawings beyond their ostensible function as cribs for the final painting. Many of the works in this exhibition breathe an unabashed sense of joy in the act of drawing.



reviewed here.

The exhibition as a whole is limited to works from English collections, if limited is the right word. The astonishing richness of the Raphael holdings in England, the background to which is nicely explained by John Gere and Nicholas Turner in their catalogue introduction, means that every major aspect, chronological and functional, is represented.

Anyone familiar with the British Museum Prints and Drawings Gallery will know exactly what to expect - careful scholarship and balanced connoisseurship, sometimes verging on over-caution, and an unostentatious presentation which makes little or no concession to modern fashions. *Afficionados* of the print room shows will also be familiar with the problems: the muddling sequence of wall-mounted and free-standing cases, which makes for less than smooth progression along the planned route; the oblique top-lighting which makes the less well-preserved drawings (of which a worrying number come from Chatsworth) look like relief maps of irregular terrain; and the somewhat unvaried quality which comes from too many exhibits (202) of an essentially similar nature.

The catalogue (256pp, with 202 black-and-

also illustrate the divergence of opinions and attitudes of these vital years. Lindsey Anderson's new production, while claiming to be a "play for today", shows great respect for specificities of time and place.

Chekhov uses various devices to establish his characters; the straightforward musing of "you remember... Grisha was only a little boy, when..."; the confessional "Ah! I have sinned"; the pedagogic "Why don't you...?"; but above all through highly individualized speech patterns: from the barely audible, sonile mimblings of Mrs. Gurov, the debased bureaucratic rhetoric of Epikhodov, the clumsy colloquialisms of Lopakhin to the highly literary, poetic "speeches" of Gurov. The density, variety and telling detail of Chekhov's language have been a challenge to many translators, and it is rather disconcerting that no translator is credited with the lively text used at the Haymarket.

Although Kenneth Mollor's sets are suitably

white illustrations. £8.95. 0 7141 0794 8) is also as expected - addressing itself at a high level to actual and aspiring cognoscenti. Technical questions are not consistently explained. For instance, there is an account of "auxiliary cartoons" but no clear exposition of the troublesome question of the "offsets" made from chalk drawings. The convoluted discussions of the history of related paintings in some of the entries (eg nos 63 and 113) really require the assistance of reference works. The sooty photographs of completed paintings in the exhibition help less than they should. The less wary visitor should also be warned that the recent tide of inclusivist attributions in Raphael scholarship, for all its welcome open-mindedness, has washed some distinctly odorous fish on to the shoreline of Raphael's *oeuvre*. The organizers' understandable reluctance to commit themselves, particularly in the individual labels, will leave many visitors in a state of doubt.

The ultimate aims behind this exhibition and its catalogue are not significantly different from those laid down by Sir Charles Robinson in his 1879 catalogue of the Ashmolean drawings: "it was essential to arrive at definite conclusions as to the authenticity of the several specimens; to determine, if possible, the intention and ultimate destination of each drawing; and also, in the case of preparatory studies for known works, to give some account of the finished productions".

These are laudable and indeed essential ambitions, but there does not seem to me to be a need for different ways of approaching an artist's preparatory drawings. The almost exclusive attention to a ladder of chronological

tions which other juxtapositions might suggest. Why did Raphael pick up a pen one moment and a piece of red chalk at another? Did a certain kind of subject elicit a specific kind of creative process? How did the scale of the project affect his design procedure? Is there any real consistency in his methods across his career or even within the same period? There are many such possible lines of enquiry.

I believe there is considerable scope for new kinds of appreciation of Raphael's machinery of invention, allying minute focus on the "archaeology" of each drawing with broad questions of both his and Renaissance habits of mind. I am convinced his drawings still have a great deal to tell us, but only if we shift our expectations of what is the proper, authorized way of approaching them. Spectators might make their own contributions by departing from the tyranny of the chronological progression from 1 to 202. Try selecting all the studies of male heads - or all red chalk drawings - or preliminary sketches - or whatever category you wish. You may get some odd looks as you dart here and there, against the tide, but you will have the pleasure of making your own discoveries, which will take you beyond the standard, conditioned response.

dowdy and the windows suitably beautiful, it lacks the dynamic intimacy of memorable Chekhovian productions. Individual performances are highly attractive. Joan Plowright as Ranevskaya is wonderfully dizzy and warm. Bernard Miles makes a memorable Mrs. X, with throwaway lines and tags are given too much weight. Where is the charm of Gurov (Leslie Phillips)? He seems all billiards and sweets. And why does Lopakhin (Frank Finlay) look so vacant when he isn't waving his arms about? It is as though the certainties rested with gesture rather than words. I also wonder if Lindsey Anderson has not drawn on contemporary productions at the Moscow Arts Theatre, where every movement of the original performances is preserved. It seems strangely old-fashioned on the London stage to see a line of actors turned three-quarters towards the audience.

Physical toughness recurrently receives attention in Borges's stories. In life, he displays a different kind of fortitude - apparent in his affecting candour about the way his blindness has impeded his access to facts as well as fiction. Speaking of his former abatement from criticism of the Argentine military junta, he explained "Being blind, not reading the newspapers, I'm very ignorant." Friends had thought it best to keep him in the dark about "all that misery; all those crimes", of whose existence he's become belatedly aware. "That's the reason I was silent before", he stated, with dignified matter-of-factness, adding, with a characteristic turning to English literature for backing, "Ignorance, dear Madam, sheer ignorance", as Dr Johnson said.

COMMENTARY

Seclusion

Peter Kemp

Frank Delaney and Arena
BBC2

Given Borges's taste for doubling, it seemed highly appropriate that he should appear twice on television in one week. Interviewed on the *Frank Delaney* programme, he was also the subject of an *Arena* profile. What emerged most notably on both occasions was a humane modesty. Though the Delaney programme worked itself up, as usual, into a lather of hyperbole, Borges would have none of it.

"I know my limits", he also emphasized on *Arena*. Down to earth about his recondite plays, he claimed that his is "quite a small bag of tricks". What goes into it, he pointed out too, has often been drawn from other authors - particularly English and American writers of the later nineteenth century. In life and work, both programmes suggested, Borges resembles a survivor from that period. Cerebrally gothic, toying with the esoteric, fascinated by the *doppelgänger*, labyrinths and paradox, his mind weirdly flickers with chameleonic resemblances to Stevenson, Chesterton, Poe.

It's hard to think of a more literary litterateur - as *Arena*'s résumé of his life brought out. For Borges, living and libraries seem to have been virtually synonymous. Given the run of the family bookshelves as a boy, he was urged by his father, "Read what you enjoy" - an injunction he appears to have spent the rest of his life omnivorously obeying. When he eventually took a job, it was in a library - where he preferred the catalogues to his col-

Library: though, by then, as he noted with placid irony - "care of this city of books is handed over to sightless eyes" - he had become blind.

Borges's blindness, *Arena* made clear, was a fate he'd long been stoically awaiting: his father, grandfather and grandmother had succumbed to it before him. It served to complete a process of seclusion begun as early as his boyhood. Though resident in a "suburb of dangerous streets and showy sunsets", he recalled, he "grew up in a garden behind a fence of iron palings" and a "library of endless English books". Rigidly penned in, cultivated, artificial, that garden forested his stories, just as the library was to prove their matrix. Borges's work, as he kept underlining, is intensely self-contained. The only characters to interest him are written ones: he has "not created a single character so far as I'm concerned".

Accordingly, *Arena*'s attempts to dramatize some Borges stories seemed misguided. The figures in them - ciphers moved through elegant algebraic permutations - flatly refused to come to life. Only one work, "The Meeting", came to life. Only one work, "The Meeting", transferred effectively to the screen. A creepy narrative about the knives of two dead rivals taking on a murderous life of their own; and impelling two men into a fatal skirmish, it adroitly draws on Borges's interest in both *fin de siècle* eeriness and the world of the gaucho. Here its ritualistic choreography was powerfully fleshed out - especially in the final scene where the fighters lunged and parried on a darkened lawn while the cicadas shrilled like taut nerves.

Physical toughness recurrently receives attention in Borges's stories. In life, he displays a different kind of fortitude - apparent in his affecting candour about the way his blindness has impeded his access to facts as well as fiction. Speaking of his former abatement from criticism of the Argentine military junta, he explained "Being blind, not reading the newspapers, I'm very ignorant." Friends had thought it best to keep him in the dark about "all that misery; all those crimes", of whose existence he's become belatedly aware. "That's the reason I was silent before", he stated, with dignified matter-of-factness, adding, with a characteristic turning to English literature for backing, "Ignorance, dear Madam, sheer ignorance", as Dr Johnson said.

Handwritten note in right margin: "Borges's blindness was a fate he'd long been stoically awaiting..."

All over the shop

John Burnett

MICHAEL J. WINSTANLEY
The Shopkeeper's World, 1830-1914
224pp. Manchester University Press. £19.50.
0219007283

The "nation of shopkeepers" (Adam Smith's mildly contemptuous description a generation before Napoleon adopted it) has been reluctant to write its own history. Apart from the general survey by Dorothy Davis (*A History of Shopping*, 1965) historians have either concentrated on the dramatic story of the rise of the multiples and department-stores in late Victorian and Edwardian times, or on the equally glamorous question of "where and in what manner the well-dressed Englishwoman bought her clothes" (Alison Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914*, 1964). Economic historians have always been more interested in production than in consumption—in getting rather than spending. Yet, a moment's reflection confirms how vital shopkeeping was to the expanding economy of the nineteenth century, when a population which grew fourfold and became heavily concentrated in towns and great cities came to rely on a vast army of retailers for the bulk of its food and clothing, its pots and pans, soap and candles and a hundred and one more things which a gradually rising standard of living removed from the category of luxuries into that of necessities. The mass-market required mass distribution, so that by 1911 there was a staggering total of 607,300 retail outlets in England and Wales, representing one for every fifty-nine members of the population.

Winstanley's *The Shopkeeper's World* is the first, in which he summarizes the changing world of Victorian retailing from 1830 to 1914 in forty-six pages, mainly by

working-man's fair weekly budget. Bread—or the ingredients of bread in the areas where home baking survived, principally in the North—was not uncommonly absorbed "half life" total wage of lower-paid workers, yet the bakers are missing from these pages. Janet Blackman's misleading statement that "the local town market was the family's main source of food" is perpetuated, and Winstanley himself arrives at the curious conclusion that "competition that was potentially damaging to profit margins does not appear to have been a factor in the retail trade". That may have been true of jewellers, cabinet-makers, saddlers and some other quality craft trades, but it was assuredly not true of baking, which was characterized by intense price competition and widespread adulteration.

Missing also from this section is an adequate account of how ordinary people obtained their clothes. Most women's and children's dress was made up at home by the housewife or by the 340,000 seamstresses who formed the second largest female occupation in the Census of 1851, but contemporary budgets show that farm labourers bought their hats and "foul weather coats", and town workers their shirts, trousers and waistcoats from tailors and ready-made shops, which are not accorded a place here.

When he moves to the period from 1890 to 1914 Winstanley immediately becomes more "oral" and interesting, and when he involves "oral history" accounts of retailing his book jumps into life. Here are skillfully recorded interviews with grocers and butchers, green-

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grocers and saddlers, pawnbrokers and village shopkeepers based on the Oral History research project carried out at the University of Kent. These provide much original, first-hand evidence about what went on behind the counter. Several important generalizations emerge. Many of these trades involved a high degree of knowledge and skill, in sharp contrast to today's supermarkets where assistants stack shelves with packaged, branded goods and press the keys of automatic adding-machines. Grocers, for instance, blended their own teas, smoked their own bacon in oak sawdust, cleaned fruit, ripened bananas, ground pepper, bottled beer, port and sherry and did a score of other jobs which required years of experience before a man (it was always men until the First World War) became a "first hand" at 25 shillings a week. Customers were always offered a chair (their dogs a biscuit) and "ladies" whose carriages stopped at the door merely gave their orders to the obsequious proprietor. "If they asked for a Greek sultana and you gave them an Australian you were asking for trouble . . . When the men had been trained they knew everything there was to

Victorian part-timers

Patrick Joyce

JOHN BENSON
The Penny Capitalist: A study of nineteenth-century working-class entrepreneurs
172pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan. £15.
08171 0842

This short and unassuming book opens up an area of historical inquiry that is of great but little interest to most historians. The author, John Benson, estimates that over 40 per cent of working-class families had part of their support from small-scale enterprises in the late nineteenth century.

production to services in the "submerged economy" assured its perpetuation into the present century. By its nature hidden from view, and sometimes neither respectable nor legal, such activity is difficult to document: though Benson has mined the material productively and brought the hidden economy into the light of day.

The book takes the form of an extended description of penny capitalism in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. The range of activity runs from smallholding and allotment-keeping to the spectrum of personal and financial services such as laundry, letting, hairdressing, moneylending, and the organization of savings clubs. Benson is at his best in description, while he is less sure, and very brief, on the nature and social significance of penny capitalism. There are, first of all, difficulties with the definition of the term.

It is defined as small-scale, working-class economic activity involving speculative risk-taking for profit in which the practitioner has control over the use to which capital and labour are put. The defining characteristic of control is a problematic one: many designated as penny capitalists would have been affected by larger units of capital, and conversely, though Benson excludes the self-employed, the outworker, and the sub-contractor from his definition, these would have had many, and sometimes all, the characteristics of penny capitalism. The term thus describes an exceedingly indeterminate and elusive practice, and works in a rule-of-thumb fashion (which is perhaps inevitable). The larger problem concerns the use of the nomenclature of capitalism to describe the great bulk of this activity, namely part-time enterprises. This was essentially a form of poverty rather than the management improvement of the worker's lot. It was most practised by those most on the margins of society. Thus it is in essential respects different from the expanded horizons of deliberate

know about the trade, and could tell any customer whatever they wanted to know."

But the grocer was only one among many tradesmen who had to be knowledgeable about a great variety of commodities. A good many retailers still made the articles they sold, like the saddler who "used to make practically anything in leather. A tremendous variety. Can't think of all the things we did, to tell the truth. There were dozens and dozens of different sorts of harness and parts of harnesses for a start." But Charles Evernden of Cranbrook also made four or five different sorts of leggings, horse boots for the animals which pulled mowers over the lawns of the big houses, gloves and ropes of all kinds, and repaired anything from baskets and bellows to surgical trusses and rabbit-snare. "For a lot of jobs in the old days we didn't even go and buy special instruments. They were all home-made gadgets."

Of course, there was a price to be paid for all this special attention to the individual customer, and it was generally paid by the overworked, underpaid employee. Shop assistants had to be smartly dressed, courteous yet pushing

long-term accumulation. The chosen vocabulary is anything but neutral, and it is necessary to describe this popular economy in ways that reflect its very ambiguous relationship to capitalism proper.

An understanding of penny capitalism complements our increasing awareness of the profound unevenness of the development of the industrial capitalist economies. Persistence, "archaism", and the parallel and complementary growth of different organizational forms (factory and outwork, for example) are defining marks of the "modern". Historians are only now addressing the social and political consequences of the generalization of the consequences of penny capitalism. None the less, he has established the importance of his subject, and made further exploration of such consequences more complicated and rewarding than hitherto.

Such exploration will have to consider questions of class formation and class consciousness. Penny capitalism, clearly, puts in doubt notions of class formation predicated on the increasing socio-economic homogenization of workers, their inevitable proletarianization, and the ever-increasing polarization and opposition of labour and capital. In terms of consciousness, it indicates the marked ambiguity of workers' perceptions of the social order. Such workers could be part of a highly competitive economy, marked by overproduc-

Ruling cliques

Bruce Lenman

JOHN STUART SHAW
The Management of Scottish Society 1707-1764
215pp. Edinburgh: John Donald. £15.
085276 0855

This is another solid and important study in the genre well established by such works as P. W. J. Riley's *The English Ministers and Scotland 1707-1721* and Alexander Murdoch's *The People Above*. That is to say it is a study of the activities of the Whig politicians who monopolized serious political power in eighteenth-century Scotland except during the brief and traumatic episode of Jacobite rebellion. One of the few technical criticisms that can be made of this learned work is that it is a little unbalanced due to its decision not to pay any attention to the Jacobite opposition to the Whigs. This is rather like trying to write about the Whigs without any reference to their critics. However, it is only fair to add that attitudes towards the Jacobites seem to have held views about the system which correspond with the main conclusions of this book. Especially after the Bar of 1747 emerged as

(some were fined if they failed to make a salary for twelve or more hours a day on a piecework wage: in some trades they had to live in the shop, boarded and lodged in crowded, insanitary conditions that differed little from a prison or a workhouse. And in 1911 half of all boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen were employed in shop-work, polishing, livery-carts and bicycles, humping sacks and sweeping floors as the first steps in this occupation.

All this is dealt with well. Winstanley shows how, despite the competition of multiples, department and co-operative stores, the shop successfully adapted and survived up to and beyond 1914. He reminds us that in 1890 there were still 345,000 retail outlets, 200 of them run by individual proprietors or small multiple chains of only two or three branches, and enjoying 46 per cent of the retail trade. If we are no longer offered a choice encouraged to open an account to be repaid quarterly, and guaranteed three deliveries a day, the last at 6.30 pm, we might spare a thought for those who also served, who stood and waited.

tion and undercapitalization. They might be particularly open to the influence of hegemonic forms of liberal, individualist ideology. Yet, as this study indicates without pausing the point, more often penny-capitalist activity represented an escape from waged labour, an often a deliberate rejection of the values of competitive capitalism. The search for independence was often prosecuted within old lines, and the communal and cooperative aspects of self-help enterprise were often more marked than the individualist ones. So much penny capitalism might thus be considered as a form of resistance to the dominant class identifications rather than as evidence of popular attachment to Victorian middle-class notions of self-help (though these identifications were none the less established within a competitive, divisive matrix of economic competition). There is not a great deal of credit for Mrs Thatcher in this volume: penny capitalism was more often a product of the deficiencies of capitalism than an expression of its bounty.

In understanding the working class penny capitalism thus presents us with many problems and opportunities. It indicates the social heterogeneity of that class, its diverse economic formation, and its highly ambiguous relationship to capitalism proper. It also shows us the central role of women and the family in the economic organization of the working class. In production and services as well as in consumption. It similarly indicates how much more elaborate than we sometimes think it the link between home and work. In tracing the contours of penny capitalism John Benson has put us all in his debt.

the dominant politician in North Britain in close cooperation with Sir Robert Walpole, the sixteen Scottish representative peers and the great majority of the forty-five Scots MPs were little better than a phalanx of government mercenaries. The ruling cliques of aristocrats had no difficulty in manipulating the nominally autonomous burgh representation, and indeed the Convention of Royal Burghs itself. The whole concept of representation was reduced to a nonsense by men who went to Westminster wholly obsessed with currying favour with the government. It lay himself was essentially an Englishman, by birth, education, and residence. The last thing he wanted to do was to trouble His Majesty's Government with Scottish business.

To look after their estates in North Britain the politicians needed agents. Often these were lawyers, but Dr Shaw is surely right to insist that they were often other kinds of men. The odd idealist and patriot in Edinburgh like the agent Lord Milton appears to have been very much the exception and the general reluctance to die for the régime, which was such a help to Prince Charles in 1745, becomes much easier to understand after reading this book.

Something for Everyman

John Adlard

ROBERT GIDDINGS (Editor)
The Changing World of Charles Dickens
240pp. Vision. £15.95.
08478 3253

Robert Giddings reminds us in *The Changing World of Charles Dickens* that "the full and complete apprehension of the staggering power and energy of Dickens's creativity is not just the concern of academic opinion leaders. Our awareness of Dickens is furthered and adjusted by new film, or musical, or dramatization, or radio serialization or television adaptation or paperback edition." In consequence, some of his contributors are dons, and some are not.

David Paroissien examines Dickens's faith in literature's mission to enlighten, humanize, reform, and provide both emotional and imaginative satisfaction. Thomas J. Rice delineates the political background of *Barnaby Rudge* and the political allegory the book contains, while David Craig deplores the injustice of Dickens's attitude to the rioting and demonstrating crowd, in *Barnaby Rudge* and else-

where. Dickens seems to have agreed with Henry Morley that riot and revolution were caused by "political restrictions" rather than "social evil", so it is appropriate that David Trotter, paying tribute to John Carey's *Violent Effigy*, should study metaphors of circulation, interchange and stoppage. Bert G. Hornback, author of two good books on Dickens, is facetious, sententious and ingenious on "the other portion of *Bleak House*"—the portion written neither by Esther Summerson nor by the omniscient narrator, but "the portion that you and I, as Esther's 'unknown friend' have to write"—and Jerome Meckier also considers Esther Summerson, showing how George Eliot, in *Felix Holt*, created Esther Lyon ("cultural ambassador to England's workers") to stand in contrast to her.

Two of the essays are less successful. Loralee MacPike holds that Dickens so influenced Dostoevsky that one can see through his eyes aspects of Dickens "not available through normal critical channels". Seventeen pages later she is still confident of this, but seems to have discovered very little. Roger Fowler, invoking Mikhail Bakhtin, tries to make virtues of the "inconsistencies and discords" of *Hard Times* by classifying it as a "polyphonic novel". This is

The Mystery of Edwin Drood: the solution?

Continued from page 1246

deep satisfaction from moving secretly about the low districts of London, "like Haroun al-Raschid in disguise".

1. Dickens's lifelong fascination with *The Arabian Nights*. Angus Wilson has written convincingly about the profound significance of Jasper's "oriental dream" under the influence of *The Arabian Nights* with the crowd, and the violent, those parts of it which we may suppose he was conscious of when as a child he so loved it. There are many references to *The Arabian Nights* in Dickens's work—for example, in *Marin Chuzzlewit*, chapter 5, *David Copperfield*, chapters 3 and 59, *American Notes*, chapter 9. They are frequent in the *Christmas Stories*. There is the detailed account in "A Christmas Tree" of the hold

these stories had over his childish imagination. In another story he speaks of the "sweet memories" with which the name of "the good Caliph Haroun Al-Raschid" is "scented". Of yet another passage Michael Slater in his recent *Dickens and Women* (1983) says: "As always with Dickens, *The Arabian Nights* allusions are a sure sign that his emotions are deeply stirred." "Under the influence of *The Arabian Nights*," he says, "Dickens's imagination was so deeply stirred that he was conscious of what it is that he is doing."

We should bear in mind here that if Philip Collins is right Dickens had composed a mystery plot in the real world at this time—the story of *Marin Chuzzlewit*, the assumed name, the double life. But psychological explanations are quite speculative. The solution I suggest does not depend on them. It is a simple one. *Edwin*

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

- Reinhold's selection of translations of medieval Latin lyrics, *The Virgin and the Nightingale*, was published earlier this year.
- Geoffrey Best's *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe 1770-1870* was published in 1982.
- E. K. Burdick is Professor of Greek at the University of Edinburgh.
- Robert Bowers is editor of the quarterly *Salmagundi* and Professor of English at Skidmore College.
- John Burnett's *Plenty and Want: A social history of diet in England* was published in 1966.
- Michael Burns is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Liverpool.
- Anthony Clare's *Let's Talk About Me: A critical examination of the new psychotherapies* was published last year.
- John Cottingham is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Reading.
- Katherine Duncan-Jones's *Selected Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* was published in 1980.
- Edwin Ewart's collection of poems, *All My Little Ones*, was published earlier this year.
- David Forster is Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature at Harvard University.
- Donald Fraser is Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature at the University of Cambridge.
- R. A. Fletcher's study of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela will be published in 1984.
- Barbara Hardy's *Particularities: Readings in George Eliot* was published in 1981.
- Joel Harris is a Fellow of St. Catherine's College, Oxford.
- Laura Hudson's *Hidden of Knowledge: The psychological significance of the nude in art* was published last year.
- Michael Jones is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Nottingham.
- Patrick Joyce is the author of *Work, Society and Politics: The culture of the factory in later Victorian England*, 1982.
- Martin Kemp is Professor of Art History at the University of St. Andrews.
- Bruce Lenman is Reader in Modern History in the University of St. Andrews.
- David Lodge's *Working with Structuralism* was published last year.
- Lawrence Martin is the author of *The Two-Edged Sword*, 1982.
- Edward Mendelson is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University.
- Kenneth O. Morgan's *Labour in Power, 1945-1951* will be published early this year.
- Paula Nussner's edition of the Cornish mystery play *The Creation of the World* was published earlier this year.
- David Nye is a lecturer in English at King's College, London.
- Peter Partner has taught at Winchester College since 1955.
- Tom Phillips is the author of *A Humument: A treatise of a Victorian Novel*, 1980.
- Peter Raberg's most recent novel is *The Facilitators*, 1982.
- W. W. Rostock is Professor of English at the University of Edinburgh.
- Leonard Shapiro's 1917: *The Russian Revolutions and the Origins of Present-Day Communism* was completed shortly before he died and will be published early next year.
- Robert Suddaby's *John Maynard Keynes: Volume One: Hopes Betrayed, 1883-1920* was reviewed in the TLS last week.
- David Smith is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Essex.
- Frances Spalding's biography of Vanessa Bell was published earlier this year.
- S. S. Taylor's new book is *Den Old Blighty*, 1980.
- Ann Walker's *Princess Liza: The virtuous years 1811-1847* was published earlier this year.

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Raymond Queneau's *Yours For The Telling and One Hundred Million Million Poems*, reviewed by Peter Reading in the TLS, October 14, are available in the UK (together with all other books published by Kicksnaws in Paris) from Basilisk Press Bookshop, 32 England's Lane, London, NW3.

The first three Field Day Pamphlets, a new series on arts and politics in Ireland, are Tom Paulin's *A New Look at the Language Question*, a study of the evolution and social and political implications of the language of modern Ireland; Seamus Heaney's *An Open Letter*, written in response to the poet's inclusion in the *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*; and Seamus Deane's *Civilians and Barbarians*, an examination of political terms in contemporary Anglo-Irish discourse. These are available from Irish Bookhandling Ltd, North Richmond Industrial Estate, Dublin 1, (£2 each, plus 25p postage, or £5 the set of three, plus 40p).